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# Promoting live music in the UK

A behind-the-scenes ethnography

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BMus (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Culture and Creative Arts

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

October 2011

# Abstract

Live music promoters have hitherto been academically neglected (and often publicly maligned) individuals and organisations. This thesis, then, shifts the academic focus from the recording industries towards live music and towards the figures behind-the-scenes who connect artist, audience and venue in the live music environment. To do so, this work explores the practices and experiences of promoters in the UK; it focuses on Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol, and is based on ethnographic research at case study venues. The thesis offers a phenomenological perspective on what promoters do and why, and their role as mediator with key figures such as artists and agents, as well as their relationships with the state. It argues that promoters are cultural investors (and exploiters), importers and innovators who both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology within which they operate. Finally, the thesis examines the three stages of the promotional process – planning, publicity, production – to argue that promoters are key figures not only in the construction of the musical lives of contemporary British citizens, but also in the rich cultural (and economic) ecology of cities, towns and villages in the UK.

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# Acknowledgements

There are a number of people I would like to thank, without whom this project would not have been possible.

Firstly, the live music project team, which consisted of my supervisors, Professors Martin Cloonan and Simon Frith, and Dr Matt Brennan. The support of all three has been immense and my colleagues on the project have given me confidence in my abilities, especially after a relatively long period outside the Academy. The regular team meetings have been highly enjoyable and engaging and will be sorely missed. It has also been a pleasure to work closely with Matt Brennan on the Festival Awards 2010 report. The University of Glasgow's Music department has been an excellent learning environment and the facilities of the University have been invaluable.

Secondly, the research would not have been possible without the kind assistance of a number of 'fixers' at the case study venues in each city. Particular thanks therefore goes to: Guillaume Coet and Sam Francis at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut; Tom and Barbara Boulding at Fagan's pub; Alan and Ro Deadman at Sharrow Festival; Gary Prestwich and Steve Parkhouse at St George's Bristol; Catriona Mackay at Glasgow's Concert Halls; Anne-Marie Harwood at the SECC; Mark Wolf at Mr Wolfs; and Marti Burgess and Dave Chapman at the Lakota. Thanks also go to all the many interviewees who took an interest in my research and spent the time talking to me.

Finally, I owe a great debt to my friends and family. My parents, Tom and Christine Pratt, have been incredibly supportive, and a large incentive to finish on time was to prevent my father from saying 'Don't do a Kinnock!' ad infinitum! My parents-in-law, Barrie and Hanne Webster, have also been extremely supportive, particularly in what is a very difficult time for them both. Shuna Beckett and Sabrina Lee have been amazing, even considering Sabrina lives ten thousand kilometres away in Cape Town. Finally, and most importantly, this thesis is dedicated to my husband, Jan Webster, who has been steadfastly wonderful over the entire three-year journey. From moving to a somewhat damp and cold part of the country, and his consistently intelligent comments on my work, to reading, re-reading, and re-reading the thesis again, and his ability to know when a hug and a bath is exactly what is required at the time, I could not have done this without him.

# Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Emma Webster

6 October 2011

# Chapter One: Introduction

Artists and audiences, both at the heart of the live music event, often assume that their behaviour and experience of that event is purely symbiotic. My assertion, however, is that a key figure in the construction of the event, and therefore the artist's and audience's overall experience, is the (often) *backstage* figure of the promoter. Live music promoters, however, have hitherto been academically neglected (and often publicly maligned) individuals and organisations. This thesis, then, shifts the academic focus from the recording industries (Williamson and Cloonan 2007), towards live music and towards the figures behind-the-scenes who connect artist, audience and venue in the live music environment. As Frith and Cloonan (n.d.) write, 'For music makers and listeners alike the live music experience defines the value and pleasure of music ... [therefore to] understand live music from promoters' perspectives is to get a better understanding of the contemporary music business, the UK's music culture, and what it is that audiences want and get from the musical experience'. Indeed, as Arvidsson states, promoters are among the most influential and highest status characters in urban scenes today (2008, p. 333). And yet such figures often remain deliberately covert – part of the work of backstage workers is to conceal the machinations from the frontstage region (Goffman 1990) – even though their decisions and actions profoundly affect the presentation of live music, from folk sessions in tiny pubs to spectacular stadium shows.

Recent developments in the live music sector have heightened the need for a PhD-length critical examination of the work of promoters in the UK in the contemporary period, and the research is therefore both timely and important. Live music as a source of income is increasingly significant for musicians as revenue from record sales continues to decline (Page and Carey 2010); live music is therefore also increasingly important for the music industries (Frith 2007). Local and national policy-makers impact greatly on the promotion of live music through economic subsidy, planning policies and regulation (Frith, Cloonan and Williamson 2009), and would also benefit from an understanding both of how local live music promotion works and how it fits in with the wider structure of the live music industries in the UK. As Cohen points out, while ethnography may not initially seem ideally suited to the task, it could, in fact, contribute much to policy making: by focusing upon the individuals who negotiate regulatory frameworks, for example, the impact of

policy can be properly examined in the ways in which such individuals ‘construct meaning and identity within particular structural constraints’ (Cohen 1993, p. 134). Finally, scholars are becoming increasingly interested in live music (Holt 2010), but not enough is yet known about the fundamentals of how live music events are constructed and within which contexts (Frith and Cloonan, n.d.). An understanding of promoters’ practices will therefore be useful to a wide variety of interested parties.

This thesis therefore examines the role of the promoter in-depth to argue that, while the promoter’s role appears simple – booking both artist and venue, attracting an audience, and then collecting and distributing any financial earnings to relevant parties (Competition Commission 2007, p. 13) – the promotion of live music is, in fact, highly complex and difficult to carry out successfully over a sustained period. It argues that the promotion of live music is inherently risky and highly variable; that promoters are cultural investors (and exploiters), importers and innovators who both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology within which they operate; and that the role of the promoter is to mediate between a variety of different parties in the three stages of the promotional process: planning, publicity, production.

## **Aim and approach**

The aim of this thesis is to fill a gap in the literature about the practices of contemporary live music promoters, and to explore the contexts within which such important figures work, focusing on the case study cities of Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol. The issue is approached in three ways:-

- 1) A phenomenological perspective on the practices, motivations and constraints of those who contemporaneously promote live music in the UK;
- 2) An ethnographic investigation into the live music ‘ecology’ within which the promoter operates, focusing on the network of relationships developed and maintained by the promoter, and the particular regulatory, physical, and economic constraints and opportunities within such an ecology;

3) An ethnographic investigation of the practices of promoters, focusing on their role in the planning, publicity, and production stages of live music promotion and the effects on the participant experience.

The introduction now establishes the parameters within which these issues will be discussed: first by defining what is meant by live music within the context of the investigation; and second by exploring the contemporary live music landscape in the UK. Finally, the chapter details the structure of the thesis and offers an overview of individual chapters.

## **Defining live music**

This thesis is cross-genre in scope, although grounded in Popular Music Studies. The definition of live music in this context is therefore broad, partly because of my own experience and knowledge, but also because the venues in which live music takes place are often not generically specific themselves. Live music is most simply understood, however, as people singing and/or playing music on instruments, but this thesis takes a wider view of live music to include music provided by DJs for dancers. As Brennan *et al* (forthcoming) write, the inclusion of DJs as providing 'live music' may seem oxymoronic, but venues combining live and recorded music are an important part of the history of live music promotion in the UK; music provided by DJs is not 'dead music' after all, according to Frith (personal communication, 26 October 2010). While there are obvious differences between 'club nights' and 'gigs', such a distinction is problematic as elements of both (simultaneous and recorded production of sound) frequently appear in both types.

In a sense, then, the 'live' aspect of live music is not simply about whether the music is being produced in real-time on 'real' instruments (although this does impact on the experience for the participants). Rather the 'live' element of live music is focused participation within a social music event. Across my case study venues, for example, dancing occurred to both 'live' musicians and to DJs playing pre-recorded music; the point is that dancing occurred, not how the music was produced. 'Live' music then becomes about participation rather than how the sound is made. An event is hereby classed as 'live' if two or more participants (artists and audiences) gather to listen to live music in a public place and react in real-time to the music being heard, whether through dancing at

a free party out in the countryside, applauding at a symphony concert, or creating the music themselves at a folk session in a pub.

Live music is also defined as local music, 'bound up with the social production of place' (Cohen 1995, p. 444). Frith (2008a) theorises that live music events require an artist, a venue, an audience, appropriate technology, and a catalyst – or promoter – whose role is that of bringing all these elements together. Unlike a physical product, then, the live music event is dependent on the successful combination of a variety of elements that have to come together at a specific place and time, hence by its nature, live music must happen in a particular locality. In order to contextualise the work of promoters, their role is therefore explored ecologically (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming).

The local ecology defined by Frith, Cloonan and Williamson (2009) necessarily contains a range of venues (small, large, 'professional', 'amateur') in order for new talent to be allowed to develop, as well as an environment in which there can be an overlapping of these 'amateur' and 'professional' spheres. As well as physical spaces in which to produce music, however, a local live music ecology also consists of the networks between people, social groups, and their environment (Banks *et al* 2000). Such an ecology also exists within unique local physical, social, industrial and economic infrastructures, and within wider regional, national and international frameworks, hence ecologically speaking, the local is inextricably intertwined with a wider ecology. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the live music ecology most often refers to the local, although the wider ecology is also discussed. The factors necessary for a 'healthy' ecology are addressed throughout this thesis.

## **Context of study**

Live music in the UK (or the live music 'industries', at least) appeared to be booming during the research period (2008-10): consumer spending on live music reached £1.54 billion in 2009<sup>1</sup>, up from £1.39 billion in 2008 (Page and Carey 2010), even during a global

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<sup>1</sup> These figures were obtained using a combination of data on primary tickets from PRS receipts, secondary tickets from Tixdaq, and estimations of 'on-the-night' spend. It should be pointed out, however, that reliable figures for live music are all but non-existent, except in the state funded sector.

economic crisis. The Competition Commission ascribes this growth to a variety of factors including: a reduction in the value of sales of recorded music, resulting in an increasing need for artists to tour in order to generate income<sup>2</sup>; the growth in 'heritage tours' by bands which were successful in the past<sup>3</sup>; and a wider diversity of festivals, appealing to a wider base of consumers (2010b, p. B1). However, there are some signs among those who work in live music that the current mood of optimism will almost certainly diminish in future years; live music at lower levels than national tours and festivals appears to be, conversely, suffering (Sullivan 2008; Sharp 2010b; 'Is live music . . .' 2011). Also, as ticket prices continue to rise (Krueger 2005; Frith 2007; Brennan and Webster 2010), figures indicating growth could simply be a matter of fewer tickets at higher prices. That said, if one flicks through the listings sections of the local press or online, it appears that there is a wealth of live music to be enjoyed in Britain in 2011, from large-scale arena shows and hundreds of festivals, to small gigs in pubs and dance events in nightclubs. Consumers and producers now have a variety of choice unimaginable fifty years ago, to which promoters have made a significant contribution.

## Structure of thesis

The remainder of the thesis comprises nine chapters. In terms of the overall structure, Chapter Two reviews the existing state of knowledge and provides the foundation for the theoretical framework of the study, while Chapter Three sets out and justifies the methods used to collect and analyse the data. Chapters Four to Nine present the empirical findings of the research in three parts, and Chapter Ten draws the main results together and discusses their significance and implications.

As stated earlier, the study of live music promotion within academia is relatively uncharted. Chapter Two therefore examines what *is* already known about live music and the construction thereof in four ways: what live music is; why it is important; what is

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<sup>2</sup> As Frith (2009, p. 10) writes, 'As the value consumers were willing to place on CDs fell, the value consumers were willing to place on live music rose'.

<sup>3</sup> Promoter Mark Mackie from Edinburgh-based Regular Music explained that the decline in record sales means that artists' royalties are 'drying up' and hence so are managers' incomes: 'So they phone them at that mansion in, whatever, in Essex, and say, "Get fucking out on the road, we need to make money!"' (Mackie 2008).

already known about the production of live music; and what is already known about live music promoters. The literature review argues that too little is already known about the promotion of live music in the UK and that a PhD-length investigation is necessary.

Chapter Three begins by outlining and justifying the research approach and methodology. To understand the necessarily covert practices of promoters, an ethnographic approach was required, consisting of interviews with relevant live music personnel and audiences and participant observation at case study venues. Each local live music ecology is unique, therefore to understand promotion more fully, case studies in three cities – Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol – were needed in order to compare and contrast practices and constraints. The venues chosen in each city as case studies range from a small folk pub in Sheffield to a ten thousand capacity arena in Glasgow, and a detailed description of cities and case study venues and the rationale behind the choices is given in this chapter.

Part One: Chapter Four is the first of five chapters that present the findings of the empirical research. While others have sought to define promoters, Chapter Four argues that a phenomenological approach is necessary to understand both what they are, and why and how they become promoters. It argues that the promoter's role is highly variable (hands on/off); complex (multiple responsibilities); competitive (attendance figures; profit driven); covert (identity; branding); and contradictory (career pathways; motivations).

Chapters Five and Six form Part Two of the thesis, which explores the role of the promoter within the context of the live music ecology, to illustrate how they both shape and are shaped by said ecology. Hence Chapter Five examines the infrastructures within which the live music promoter necessarily works to show how the promotion of live music is formed within the live music ecology. It argues that while tensions exist between the parameters set by promoters and those set by others, constraints and opportunities set by the state relating to safety, physical infrastructure, and subsidy are necessary.

Chapter Six is the second to explore the live music ecology. It explores the networks within which the promoter operates to illustrate how they mediate between a wide variety of people with conflicting interests. The chapter then investigates the changing structures within the wider live music industries to illustrate how promoters can also shape the live music ecology within which they work.

Parts One and Two explore what promoters are and the contexts within which they work; the third and final part of the thesis explores what they do in more depth, and is comprised of three chapters. Chapter Seven conceptualises the live music event and establishes the theoretical models that underpin the final part of the thesis. It sets out a typology of live music events and a framework for understanding participant behaviour. The chapter then explores how the promoter matches the artist with the most appropriate venue for their status, musical style, and expected audience capacity for maximum gain (or, at the least, minimum loss), based on their assumptions of the performative and behavioural expectations of both artist and audience.

Chapter Eight examines the role of the promoter in publicising the live music event, to show that while the promoter is ultimately responsible for advertising and selling the show, at one and the same time they are reliant on a variety of other sources, which relate both to the networks explored in previous chapters and the live music ecology.

Chapter Nine examines the event itself; the culmination of the work of the promoter as shown throughout the thesis. The chapter therefore examines the role of the promoter within the production of the event, the dynamic modifiers with which they can manage participant behaviour, how the promoter handles crises, and the necessity of evaluation after the event.

Chapter Ten draws together the main findings of the study and begins by revisiting the aims and methodological approach. The main contributions and findings are then discussed to highlight what has been ascertained about the practices of and constraints on live music promoters. Suggestions are then made for future research before the findings are reflected upon, and the thesis concludes with some final remarks.

# Chapter Two: Literature review

## Introduction

The literature review asks what is already known about live music and the promotion thereof. As stated in the introduction, this thesis has a wide generic scope but is grounded in Popular Music Studies, therefore the majority of the literature comes from that field. The chapter argues that the live music event is highly complex and consists of participants with sometimes contradictory motivations and desires, hence it follows that the promotion of live music is also highly complex. To show this, first the literature review further defines live music by asking what has already been written about its functions and meanings, and draws together Small's concept of 'musicking' (1998), Frith's theory of musical discourse (1996), and Turino's typology of live music events (2008). Secondly, the literature review asks why live music matters to its participants to establish what has already been written about participant motivation, drawing on the ethnographic work of Cohen (1991), Finnegan (2007) and others. Thirdly, it asks what is known about the production of live music, using Peterson and Anand's production of culture perspective (2004) and concepts of social capital (Lin 2001; Bourdieu 2007). Finally, it examines how promoters have already been defined and written about, drawing on the work of Becker (1982; 1998), and Brennan and Webster (2011) to define the promoter and their practices.

As stated in the introduction, live music provides a rich but under-researched area for study (Frith *et al* 2010), and the promotion of live music in the UK provides a significant and yet surprisingly neglected site of social inquiry (Frith and Cloonan, n.d.). As they state: 'There is no academic work on contemporary promoters, agents or venues' (*ibid.*). Scholarly research has long tended to focus on the text – the score in classical musicology and the recorded medium in Popular Music Studies. However, as Cohen states, the meaning of music does not reside within musical texts, but depends upon the interaction between those texts and individuals (1993, p. 132). While Cohen posits that, unlike recordings, live music offers 'music-as-experience' as opposed to 'music-as-commodity' (1991, p. 101), live music is particularly interesting because it can offer both at the same time. Nevertheless, while academic interest in the live music environment has been steadily increasing in the twenty-first century, it is only recently that academics appear to

be taking live music seriously as a field of study and to begin to theorise its practice and economics (Holt 2010). Indeed, previous commentators suggested that live music was a 'secondary level of involvement' to that of recorded music (Shuker 1994, p. 235), and, due to an over-emphasis on the recording industries by commentators such as Negus (1996; 1999), live music has previously been relegated to the 'retail' part of the music supply chain rather than as a site of production and consumption in its own right (Moss 2009, p. 53).

Research into live music to date has tended to focus on artists (in performance: see Cohen 1991; Inglis 2006; Pattie 2007; etc.) and audiences (in participation: see Cavicchi 1998; Drew 2001; Fonarow 2006; etc.), rather than the behind-the-scenes production of live music, although there is a small but growing body of literature from the promoter's point of view (Frith 2007; Cluley 2009; Brennan and Webster 2011; etc.). Event Management Studies is one field which has become increasingly interested in live music, as indicated by the launch of the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* in 2010. Marketing Studies is another field increasingly interested in this area, as evidenced by the launch of *Arts Marketing: An International Journal* in 2011. Such approaches have tended to be managerial and rationalist, however, focusing on effectiveness and market demand factors and financial management, rather than social and cultural aspects (Anderton 2007).

By way of illustration, the *Journal of Arts Marketing* is produced by the Arts Marketing Association, a professional body for arts marketing practitioners, rather than an academic journal *per se*. To offer another example, a number of studies have been undertaken to assess the motivations of festival attendees, both UK-based and beyond (for example, Nicholson and Pearce 2001; Bowen and Daniels 2005; Browne 2009; Gelder and Robinson 2009; Wakiuru Wamwara-Mbugua and Cornwell 2010). However, these approaches take a broad definition of 'festival' to include festivals other than purely music-based events, often use a quantitative rather than a qualitative methodology, and the articles tend to conclude with recommendations for event managers.<sup>4</sup> Recent work on the Cultural

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<sup>4</sup> Added to this, the work of Gelder and Robinson, for example, focuses on two festivals in the UK – Glastonbury and V – but uses an unconvincing methodology: the questionnaire was conducted at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall rather than at the festivals themselves, and garnered only sixty-one responses (2009, p. 187).

Economy (see Amin and Thrift 2004; Getz 2007), however, suggests that a focus on the socio-cultural background and beliefs of key decision-makers and the socio-cultural and historical milieux within which event organisers and promoters operate would be useful (Anderton 2007), hence the basis for this thesis.

## **The functions and meanings of live music**

The first task of the literature review is to draw on existing definitions of live music and its uses. In terms of its spatial and temporal nature, music can be seen as a complex sound event, consisting of the manipulation of sound waves through the air that, much like any other physical object, can be located in time and space (Kivy 2002, pp. 205-6). Music is therefore both a 'sensory episode' experienced through the ear, and a 'tactile phenomenon' experienced through vibration and often accompanied by visual imagery (Johnson and Cloonan 2008, p. 14). However, music is also intertwined with memory, emotion, dynamics of identity and taste, and relations of power or conflict (ibid.). While these offer somewhat broad definitions of both recorded and live music, this section shows that, unlike recorded music, live music events combine music with social human interaction in a complex ritualised setting.

Music psychologists argue that the functions of music fall into three broad domains – cognitive, emotional, and social – whereby music's social functions are manifested in the management of interpersonal relationships, mood and self-identity (Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell 2002). Sociologists also perceive music's functions as social. As Finnegan writes in her exemplary ethnographic work on the 'hidden musicians' of Milton Keynes,<sup>5</sup> musical activity cannot be separated from its social aspects (2007, p. 328), and Frith has suggested that music is 'a social event, an aspect of a social situation ... a living aspect of public life' (2003, p. 95).

Music can be a social enabler or 'enhancer of communication at the group level' (Brown 2006, p. 4), and in this way, the meaning of music describes not just an interpretive but a social process (Frith 1996, p. 250), thereby establishing live music as a social activity

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<sup>5</sup> Finnegan's work is also especially relevant to my work as part of my focus will be to examine the 'hidden promoters': those removed from the 'live music industry', but without whom the ecology of local live music could collapse.

whose meaning is socially constructed (see also Shuker 1994; Longhurst 1995; Negus 1996; Moore 2001; Frith 2007). Brown identifies six aspects of music's role as a cooperative device that implicates behavioural control, including music's role in assisting in defining and reinforcing social identity, and as an important basis for sorting people into groups in large-scale societies (2006, pp. 4-5). While music cannot intrinsically do any of these things, however, it can be used as a social tool to enhance all of them, and live music events are settings at which some or all of these aspects can be seen to operate.

That music is a social tool is a view shared by ethnomusicologists. However, while ethnomusicological literature is useful for further understanding the meanings of music and live music events, it should be remembered that for many ethnomusicological research subjects, music is often functional, ritualistic, and participatory, rather than purely entertaining, presentational, and compartmentalised as a social activity outside of 'everyday life' as in much of the Westernised societies. Similar to Brown's six aspects of music as a device for communicative enhancement, Merriam lists ten major functions – as opposed to uses – of music, including enforcing conformity to social norms, and contribution to the integration of society (1964, cited in Nettl 1983, p. 147). Nettl usefully summarises Merriam's ten functions to state that 'music functions as a symbolic expression of the main values, patterns, or themes of a culture' (ibid., p. 150).

Nettl develops Merriam's argument to state that music is able to express, in the abstract, the *ideal* values of political structure in society and is therefore an educational tool in which to teach the next generation the important values of that society (ibid., p. 160). This view is endorsed by Blacking, who also perceives a reflection of the human interactions of societies within the musical structures favoured by that society (1995, p. 22). As Finnegan states, 'ultimately, the institutions and traditions of our society are perpetuated and recreated' through musical activity (2007, p. 331), although it should be added that musical activity also exists with a complex framework of historical, economic and political processes. A live music event, then, can act as an audible representation of community which helps to structure community life (Haslauer 2008, n.p.).

Blacking's concept is further developed by Small (1998), who offers the notion of 'musicking' to understand the meaning of live music events. As with the scholars mentioned above, Small also argues that music's primary meanings are social, not

individual, and reflect and establish an idealised set of relationships between the participants in which the meaning of the act lies (ibid., p. 13). To illustrate this, Small unpacks the symphony concert 'ritual', from ticket purchase to the concert itself. Hence for Small, the (capitalist) rituals that surround a symphony concert are a means of upholding the values and ideals of a particular part of society, namely the bourgeoisie. Motivation for attendance, therefore, is based around not only the music on offer, but the ways in which the genre conventions – 'genre cultures' (Negus 1999, pp. 24-30) – and types of social interaction available explore, affirm and celebrate the values of the participants within the event (Small 1998, p. 183). Of particular importance to the promoter who organises such an event, then, success depends on the presence of 'ideal relationships as imagined by those taking part in the ceremony' (ibid., p. 193).

However useful and convincing Small's work initially appears to be, there are fundamental flaws to some of his arguments. Small posits that at a symphony concert, there is little or no sense of 'community' as the concert hall is a place which fosters impersonal encounters among people of similar class status. Much of Small's discontent with symphony concerts stems from the rigid physical and verbal responses to the music and the relative inaction of those present in the co-production of the musical experience. As he illustrates in his work on European (classical) music and anthropology, '[the listener's] separateness from both composer (whom it is unlikely that he will have ever seen) and performer makes it impossible for him to play any part in the process of making an art work' (Small 1977, p. 29). However, as Pitts (2005) shows in her work on the value of musical participation, the supposedly passive audiences at symphony concerts – and classical concerts in general – suggested by Small are often anything but. Audiences are 'active partners' (Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell 2002, p. 13) who may take a full and active role in various aspects of the musical life of an organisation, such as suggesting season programmes or organising fundraising events (Pitts 2005), as well as playing their own role in the spectacle of the performance, through applause and other forms of participation.

Small's somewhat utopian idealisation of rock festivals (1998, pp. 45-6) is particularly problematic, especially if one studies the history of festivals in the UK. As Johnson and Cloonan suggest, size and audience profile make a large rock festival a 'likely site' for violence (2008, p. 92), and hence perhaps not 'ideal' in the way that Small suggests. As is

shown in the following section of this chapter, participants in the live music event necessarily have different motivations and desires, and this has spilled over into violence on occasion between groups with differing ideologies, from the Beaulieu jazz festival in 1960 (trad fans versus modern fans) to the 1970 Isle of Wight festival (anarchists versus commercial interests). If rock festivals reflect an idealised 'potential society' (Small 1977, p. 166), such clashes should not occur. Small's concept of imagined ideal relationships is therefore perhaps more useful if the idealism is viewed more pragmatically. The ideal relationships envisioned by Small could then be drafted as an 'optimum' community of participants which the various parties seek but do not always get. This concept is drawn on throughout this thesis when understanding how promoters construct their events for such 'taste communities' (Finnegan 2007).

Finally, while Small's concept of 'musicking' describes any form of musical participation, it is argued here that music experienced in a live setting is fundamentally different from that experienced via a recording on one's personal stereo, for example, as a live music event is a complex audio-visually integrated activity (Thompson, Graham and Russo 2005, p. 177). The divide between recorded and live music has not always been present, of course; neither have the distinctions between types of musical event (outdoor/indoor; private/public; commercial/non-commercial, for example) as music's uses evolve constantly over time due to economic, cultural, social, and technological forces. The next section therefore examines the different forms of musical participation and their origins, and how they relate to musical 'art worlds' (Becker 1982) in the twenty-first century.

### ***Changes in the social meanings of music over time***

The previous section established live music events as social activities; the discussion now turns to the changes in music's social meanings over time as these impact on the type of event organised by the contemporary promoter. For instance, the twentieth-century has seen 'live music' become something other than simply music, due to the development of recording technology and changes in domestic music-making (Finnegan 2007, pp. 193-7). However, it is argued that such changes have always been a feature of music's development over time. Forsyth, for example, in his excellent work on buildings for music (1985), illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the development of music venues and the music played therein. Kivy writes of a 'Great Divide' within Western music

beginning in the eighteenth century, after which music was written with the concert hall in mind rather than for audience participation (2002, p. 106).

Bessler's concepts of 'participatory music' and 'performance music' illustrate how this change has been long in the making. Participatory music, he writes, was the primary part of music culture and is distinguished by an emphasis on the performer and their musical interpretation, where reception of the music is predominantly spontaneous and which 'Immediate functionality assures a relatively wide basis of consumption in society' (1959, p. 14, quoted in Blaukopf 1992, p. 193). Performance music in the concert hall, on the other hand, was the secondary part of musical culture, especially during the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, and was 'emancipated from immediate functionality' to emphasise the authorised originality of the musical work, its aesthetic effect, and its ethical and increasingly intellectual meaning (ibid., p. 193). Blaukopf links the development of performance music to the rise of a less participative, spectatorial audience, stating that 'Participatory music requires audience involvement, while performance music is produced for passive listeners' (ibid., p. 195). As with Small's thesis, however, it is suggested here that a spectatorial audience and the way they listen is not inherently passive.

### ***Musical practices and discourses***

It is necessary to understand the divisions between types of event as promoters both establish and are constrained by such divisions. However, there does not yet exist a satisfactory typology of contemporary live music events with which to understand the meanings of live music events. Frith's *Performing rites* (1996) takes a sociological perspective that includes little about the music itself but does offer a useful framework with which to examine live music. Combining Becker's 1982 work on 'art worlds' and Bourdieu's 1984 work on 'taste', Frith offers the concept of evaluative musical discourses of ideal sets of value which describe the aesthetic and social values of each 'art world' and 'taste group'. In Frith's work, discourses are not simply descriptive of a pre-existing world, but instead each one produces that world and its social institutions, genres and behaviours. Hence, the art discourse stems from Bourdieu's concept of 'dominant culture' or bourgeois musical discourse, and is organised by the Academy with its focus on talent and scholarship. The folk discourse, in contrast, features no separation of art

from life, or performer from audience, and is anti-commercial in nature and outlook. Frith's third discourse, the 'commercial discourse' or 'majority culture', for which values are created and organised around the music industry, offers a kind of 'routinised transcendence' or an escape from the daily grind (1996, pp. 41-2). An event of this nature includes a separation between artist and audience – producer and consumer – but the audience are often expected to participate through singing along or dancing; in other words, to have fun. However, as Frith himself notes, even these divisions are too simplistic and far more complicated in practice, as it is difficult to take these three models as wholly discrete due to the overlap between genres and genre conventions (Finnegan 2007, p. 150). Nevertheless, Frith's model is useful and is discussed further in the context of promoters later in this chapter.

Turino (2008) on the other hand takes a partly musicological approach with his framework of live music events, and posits a similar division of live performance to Blaukopf to suggest that live music may be 'presentational' or 'participatory' (and that recorded music is either 'studio art' or 'high fidelity'). Turino argues that the former features a separation of audience and performer, and the latter features a blurring of such boundaries, whether through participating in the production of the music itself, or through the production of spectacle through dancing (*ibid.*, pp. 23-65). He defines features of the music which are intrinsic to each type: presentational music, for example, is inherently more virtuosic and complex than participatory music. Turino's typology is, perhaps, still too simplistic for the full range of live music events available to the promoter, however, and he is somewhat biased towards the supposedly inherent 'democratic' qualities of participatory music (*ibid.*, p. 92).

Turino's distinctions are described as 'open-ended' but could be perhaps better described as a continuum of live music practices, with purely presentational at one end of the spectrum and entirely participatory at the other. From my own research, two additional categories could be added within such a continuum: 'participatory presentational' and 'presentational participatory'. The two types of participation identified by Turino could be equated with Frith's art and folk discourses, while the two new categories relate to Frith's 'commercial music world'. Combining Frith and Turino's work in this way provides both a sociological and musicological understanding of the nature of live music events and these demarcations form the groundwork for a typology of live music events presented in

Chapter Seven. To conclude this section of the chapter then, live music events are necessarily complex ventures for the promoter as they exist within overlapping social, historical, and musical discourses.

## **Why live music matters to its participants**

The second part of the chapter examines why live music matters to its participants by examining motivations to attend: first to understand the promoter's complex mediating role; and second to understand how the promoter necessarily seeks to attract an 'optimum' community of participants. To understand participant motivations, however, it is first necessary to understand the variety of roles within the event. To this end, it is worth further examining academic work on rituals. Based on the work of Brian Sutton-Smith, Schechner typologises participants in a ritual as follows: 'players' or the group or individual that stages (or creates) the event; 'spectators' or the group that receives this communication (the audience); 'directors' or the group that directs or oversees; and 'commentators' or those who comment (critics and scholars) upon the event (1993, p. 43). Promoters would therefore fall into both the first category of 'stagers' and the third category of 'overseers', and may also fulfil Schechner's other two types of participant role. Drawing on Goffman's 1974 work on participant structures, Fonarow groups ritual participants as follows: audiences as 'participant spectators'; musicians as 'ritual practitioners'; and promoters ('industry personnel') as 'ritual specialists' in the event (2006, p. 21). Hence there are a number of different types of participant within the event with differing – and sometimes contradictory and even conflicting – motivations and desires.

To examine audience motivation therefore allows one to understand the role of the promoter as stager/overseer/specialist – or mediator – between the various participants in the event (albeit often necessarily covertly or by employing others to do so on their behalf). Furthermore, motives are a precursor of satisfaction and a factor in decision making (Crompton and McKay 1997), hence an examination of motivations can lead to an understanding of the experience the promoter seeks to persuade audiences to purchase and enjoy, as is explored later in the thesis. As Pitts writes, 'By making sense of why live music is appealing to people, musicians and promoters can market the most relevant aspects of the experience' (2010, p. 109). And yet, as she continues, audiences are not

always motivated by ticket price and accessibility, but also ‘high quality music played by musicians who seem approachable, opportunities for social interaction with like-minded audience members, and a sense of belonging and connection’ (ibid.). However, the concept of ‘like-minded’ is inherently problematic as groups will inevitably contain members with conflicting ideals and expectations, hence ‘an optimum community of participants’ is perhaps a more accurate term, as discussed above relating to the work of Small (1998). Hence this section examines a number of common participant motivations to show that conflicts may exist. It argues that live music is a social event in which participants seek a (temporally and spatially) unique social and emotional musical experience with a (socially) optimum community of participants.

To begin, Frith in his 2007 article, ‘Live music matters’, highlights a number of reasons why people value live music *performance* but many of these factors also apply to more participatory music events. Frith illustrates the wide variety of motivations which may exist at a live music event: the live show is ‘the only unique situation left’; a live concert symbolises what musical fandom entails and is essential for the creation and maintenance of a fan base; the live show is ‘the truest form of musical expression’ and is therefore authentic; and live music and venues are essential to the mythology of music (ibid., pp. 8-9). Frith concludes that motivation for attendance at live music events is tied up with people’s identity, ‘as the experience which for most music lovers defines their musical tastes’; that people have a drive to share music in a ‘public celebration of musical commitment’; and the live music event is a site in which to explore how performance works (ibid., p. 14). Frith, however, focuses solely on karaoke, tribute bands and reality TV shows – usually commercial endeavours often at odds with the wider folk and art worlds described above – whereas this section of the literature review now examines some of these themes within broader genre cultures.

Unlike viewing a static portrait in an art gallery, it is argued that each live music event is temporally and spatially, socially, musically and emotionally distinct; attendance at a live music event is therefore a unique experience for its participants. In her 1991 work on rock music in Liverpool, Cohen writes extensively on the motivations and value given to live music by both its performers and its audiences, concluding, among other things, that live

music offers a sense of occasion as each event is unique (1991, p. 94).<sup>6</sup> Work by Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 99) concurs, to show that ‘experiences’ such as live music events are ‘inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level’. They suggest that no two people can have the same experience, because each experience derives from the interaction between the staged event (like a theatrical play) and the individual’s state of mind, hence live music events are unique experiences both in themselves and for each participant therein. Pine and Gilmore state that participation may be relatively passive or active, and that one’s connection to one’s environment may be absorbing or immersive. However, ‘absorption’ and ‘immersion’ appear to be one and the same thing in their work, and the problems inherent in ‘passive’ and ‘active’ have already been explored. Nevertheless, Pine and Gilmore offer a useful framework for understanding the participant experience, namely that it can be educational, entertaining, aesthetic, escapist, or a combination of one or more of these (ibid., p. 102).

For certain types of event, live music can be a site for developing and renewing social ties. Finnegan (2007), for example, found that many of the attendees at local, ‘amateur’ live music events are comprised of people with some connection with the performers. This suggests that motivation for attendance at such events is based on personal relationships and social commitment to perpetuate community ties through the vehicle of musical participation. Cohen highlights the social role of (rock) gigs by illustrating how a live music performance can be a site of simultaneous production and consumption that contains a complex interrelationship between audience and performer as one influences the other in a ‘continuous feedback loop’ (1991, p. 96). In this way, ‘the relationship and dialogue between audience and performers can be such that even if they do not know each other, a rapport is established’ (ibid., p. 39). The level of social interaction possible at an event, however, depends on the type of event and the discourse within which it resides (Frith 1996), as is discussed later in the thesis.

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<sup>6</sup> As well as offering insights into the motivations for band membership and the bands’ creative processes, the book also contains a particularly useful chapter on the gig experience, from the perspective of (albeit only two) bands but with audience analysis therein.

As well as offering a unique social experience for participants, there also appears to be a generalised *ideological* motivation for attendance at live music events, based on participants' systems of 'abstract ideals' (Schiffer 1974, p. 89), hence the possibility for potential conflict if participants do not share those ideals. As Cohen writes, performance 'symbolises, activates, redefines, and reaffirms' values, meanings, concepts, identities, or myths that the audience and performer *might* share (1991, p. 40, author's emphasis). The folk world, in particular, is based on a nostalgic link to an (imagined) pastoral, communal past in today's globalised world (Finnegan 2007, p. 26). In her work on the use of the viola in folk music, Aitkenhead (2005) posits that part of the motivation for attendance is that folk groups are often run on egalitarian and anti-commercial lines, and therefore attract people with socialist or egalitarian political tendencies, thereby deliberately positioning themselves *against* those with capitalist or elitist ideals. While this appears to support the concept that musical activities reflect a desire for the abstracted ideal societies via music suggested by Small and others, it also highlights the potential for ideological conflict within the live music event.

There may also be conflict over differing levels of commitment at a live music event. As Cavicchi states in his excellent work on Bruce Springsteen fans, concert-going involves the exploration, affirmation, and celebration of one's identity by 'forming a view of oneself as similar to other fans and as different from ordinary audience members' (1998, p. 135). Cavicchi posits that while ordinary audience members attend simply to be entertained, for fans, live music events are rituals for whom 'a concert is not a break from, but a continuing reaffirmation of their everyday lives' (*ibid.*, p. 95). While fans may seek a community of seemingly 'like-minded people' – such as fans of particular musical forms or performers (Lewis 1992, p. 26) – Cavicchi shows that, in fact, live music events contain a variety of conflicting interests, particularly between audiences and promoters (1998, pp. 62-81).

Hence participants have a variety of roles within the ritual, which is further explained by Cavicchi: 'At a rock concert, for instance, no matter what participants may be like in their "normal" daily lives, during the performance they assume new, specific roles: some people become performers, some people become crew members, and others become audience members' (*ibid.*, p. 89). Some, of course, also become promoters, but Cavicchi tends towards a somewhat one-dimensional view of promoters as purely financially

motivated (ibid., pp. 60-85). Attendance at live music events, then, can be seen as a form of role-playing, or as Johnson and Cloonan describe it, as 'a closed system with its own protocols and rules' that allows for 'collective game playing' (2008, pp. 131-6). As with any game, however, there may be potential conflicts between participants with differing ideologies, motivations, behaviours or levels of commitment.

Finally, live performance unites participants in common activity, and through live music, a sense of euphoria and a loss of 'self' can be achieved (Cohen 1991, p. 98), hence live music events can be an emotional as well as a social experience. Bruce, for example, offers an historical account of the origins of the (classical music-based) Edinburgh Festival as a form of 'social catharsis' after the traumas of World War Two, also showing how live music can offer a means of both escapism and emotional 'purification':-

We cannot even describe the experience to ourselves, for its nature is in apprehension, not comprehension ... [It was] a profound, tragic and characteristic human experience, and so was effected catharsis – 'a proper purgation of feeling', as Aristotle put it (1975, pp. 14-15).

Albeit writing about a very different musical form and type of interaction, Ambrose's work on mosh pit culture describes moshing as being like a 'Garden of Serenity' compared to everyday life (2001, p. 12). As Cohen suggests: '[The] interrelationship of components into the sensual whole of a performance thus encourages the suppression of critical, rational, logical thought so that imagination and emotions may be more freely expressed or unleashed and a sense of euphoria, or "*communitas*" ... transformation ... or catharsis can be achieved' (1991, p. 96). Such catharsis may be 'a release from everyday tensions and concerns as we are "lost" in the moment of consumption' (Shuker 1994, p. 18).

The experience of attending live music events can therefore offer emotional release and enhance social ties, but it is suggested that such '*communitas*' can perhaps be neurologically explained. Research by Cohen *et al* (2009), for instance, found that exercising in a group causes participants to release more endorphins than exercising individually and that synchrony alone seems to ramp up the production of endorphins so as to heighten the effect when these activities are done in groups. They speculate that the same could be true of other synchronised physical activities such as dancing, which appear to make people happier and increase social bonding (ibid.). Indeed, Huron, drawing on work by neurophysiologist Walter Freeman, suggests that music causes the

release of oxytocin, the hormone that increases human bonding, and that music could be an evolutionary adaptation partly for this reason (2001, pp. 57-8).

To conclude this section of the chapter, then, live music is a unique social experience in which participants seek an optimum community of participants. The discussion now turns to what is already known about the production of live music in order to further understand the promoter's role in the event.

## **The production of live music**

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, there is currently a dearth of literature around the production of live music in the UK. This section therefore draws on the work of Peterson and Anand (2004) to ascertain what *is* already known about the live music sector to show that it is not easily defined or described. Peterson and Anand identify six facets in a system of production of culture – industry structure, market, occupational careers, organisational structure, technology, and law and regulation – the disruption of any one of which will tend to disrupt and destabilise the entire system and lead to a period of adjustment (ibid., p. 318), hence the promoter must adapt and negotiate any such changes within their practices. While Peterson and Anand's analysis is useful, they perhaps neglect the importance of social relationships within the production of culture, which are addressed later in this thesis. However, the first three facets are examined below in relation to live music and live music promoters, while the latter two are explored in later chapters.

### ***Industry structures***

The first issue to be addressed is the extent and definition of the 'live music industry' and how it is structured. Williamson and Cloonan (2007) argue that the reported economic growth of the live music industry and business-model crisis in the recording industry in recent years make it problematic to refer to a single music industry with coherent characteristics, and it is therefore useful to instead apply the term 'music industries'. The live music industry could also perhaps be described as the 'live music industries', as within the live music industry are a number of 'industries' in their own right, such as production companies, booking agents, and promoters. The festival 'industry', for example, is not a unified whole, but rather clusters of what could be called 'disparate industries with some

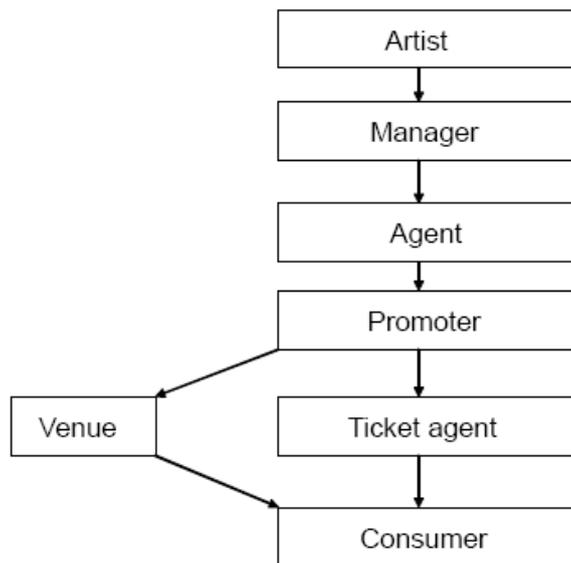
common interests' (ibid., p. 305; also see Brennan and Webster 2010).<sup>7</sup> The live music industries are, as with the recording industries, often equated with popular music, but industrial processes have also been at work in other genres. For example, seventy-five point one per cent of Raymond Gubbay Limited – one of the largest classical, ballet and opera promoters in the UK – was bought by German promoter Deutsche Entertainment AG in 2008 (Spahr 2008).

Definitions of a 'live music industry' are further complicated by the involvement of 'industrial' processes and intermediaries within 'non-industrial' events; 'state' promoters (see below), for example, may also be part of the live music industries but often have charitable or non-profit status, and even small promoters are entangled with international markets. There is little consensus even within the 'industry', and suggestions have been made to define 'core' and 'secondary' industries, namely those directly involved with the production and consumption of live music, and those on the periphery. Self-proclaimed live music industry publications, *Audience* and its sister publication *Live UK*, claim to be about 'the *business* of contemporary live music ... in this high profile, competitive, multi-billion-dollar industry' (*Audience UK* 2010, emphasis in original), therefore the live music industry could be defined as purely business-orientated, although, as stated above, this is problematic. As the advertisement for the industry conference Live UK Summit proclaims, 'If you are in live music, you need to make the summit' (Live UK Summit 2011), which appears deliberately vague in order to attract delegates perhaps considered outside the 'industry' *per se*.

For the purposes of this thesis, then, the live music industries are defined as those individuals and organisations involved in the commercial and/or cultural exploitation of live music within a 'professionalised network' (Brennan and Webster 2011). This professionalised network as it exists in the UK is illustrated by the Competition Commission in its 2010 report into the Live Nation/Ticketmaster merger, as shown in Figure 2-1 (Competition Commission 2010a, p. 10):-

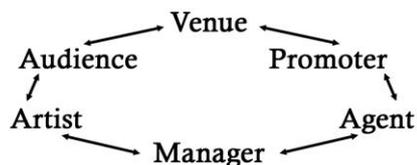
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<sup>7</sup> There is, of course, a great deal of overlap with other music industries; the future health of an industry which relies on star headliners to attract audiences is inextricably tied to the ability of the recording industry to develop new headline performers, after all (Brennan and Webster 2010). However, the focus of this thesis is on the live music sector and live music promoters.

**Figure 2-1: The live music supply chain**

The Competition Commission’s analysis of the live music ‘industry’ is based in the UK but it is worth bearing in mind that the supply chain is now increasingly international; the rise of multi-national corporations such as Live Nation is examined further in Chapter Six.

Brennan and Webster (2011, p. 4) offer the following network of intermediaries involved in putting on an ‘industrial’ type of event, as shown in Figure 2-2, and which, unlike the Competition Commission diagram, closes the loop to connect the artist/producer to the audience/consumer directly, thereby also avoiding the suggestion that all live music events originate from the artist:-

**Figure 2-2: Network of live music intermediaries**

Returning to Frith’s (2008a) model of a live music event as set out in Chapter One – artist, audience, venue, technology, promoter – it is immediately obvious that the production of live music relies on a number of inter-organisational intermediaries other than the promoter in order to bring together the elements required for the live music event.

Frith's model, then, is perhaps over-simplistic to understand the complex structures within the live music industries. Furthermore, it is shown later in the thesis that the promotion of live music is also dependent on and affected by the state and other bodies.

In order to further understand the networks between such intermediaries, the thesis draws on scholarly work on social capital. Bourdieu conceptualises social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (2007, p. 88). He is concerned, however, that social capital becomes another means for elites to hold onto power and advantage via particular networks. Indeed, a report into the lack of social mobility within the UK's creative industries by the Social Market Foundation in December 2010 found that the old adage, 'It's not what you know, but who you know' remains very true (Shorthouse 2010). Lin's updated formulation of Bourdieu's concept of social capital within an economic context is therefore useful to explore the relationships cultivated by the promoter:-

The premise behind the notion of social capital is ... *investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace* [which] may be economic, political, labour, or community. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits ... [Social capital is] capital captured through social relations . . . capital is seen as a social asset by virtue of actors' connections and access to resources in the network or group of which they are members (Lin 2001, p. 19, emphasis in original).

The concept of social capital is one long contested by scholars, however, particularly over the meaning of the term, and other commentators (in particular, Putnam 1995) perceive social capital in a more positive light. They argue for the significance of social capital in the enhancement of the quality of civic life, whereby social capital means the networks between people that knit the social fabric together. The notion of social capital in the context of live music promotion therefore requires more nuance than Lin's definition, particularly as some parts of the live music sector have only a tenuous connection to the marketplace (as is discussed below). On the one hand, then, the complex system of relationships based on trust and favours developed and maintained by promoters may well be to produce (economic, social, personal) profit, but on the other hand, the civic notion of social capital in order to build a 'healthy' live music ecology has also been

apparent in the research. For the purposes of this thesis, then, both notions of social capital are useful and are covered in more depth in later chapters.

## ***Market***

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the live music sector's growth is an area under increased scrutiny in the literature (for example, see Krueger 2005; Connolly and Krueger 2006; Frith 2007; Black, Fox, and Kochanowski 2007; Holt 2010), and there is an increasing amount of research documenting and analysing the expansion of the live music industries and the economic paradoxes inherent therein. Academic research into the economics of live music is problematic, however, as the data on live music presented by government departments such as the DCMS is perceived as unreliable and inconsistent by industry personnel and academics alike (Ashton 2010a).<sup>8</sup> While the economic value of live music is beyond the scope of this thesis, in purely economic terms live music is more than worthy of study.

To understand the market for live music, it is again worth turning to Peterson and Anand's production of culture perspective (2004). They explain that, 'Once consumer tastes are reified as a market, those in the field tailor their actions to create cultural goods like those that are currently most popular as represented by the accepted measurement tools' (ibid., p. 317). However, the reification of live performance as a market is particularly complex as it is both aided and constrained by its scarcity and its uniqueness. While on the one hand, live music promoters can persuade people that they have no choice but to pay if they want to experience their favourite artist, on the other hand, the scarcity of live performance imposes challenges on the promoter's business model (Schultz 2009, p. 721). Indeed, the problem centres on the need to create 'artificial scarcity' and to prevent certain artists playing night after night. With the growth of the live music sector in the twenty-first century, market saturation is therefore a potential problem, especially within the festival industry (Atkinson 2008b). The downturn in the United States in the summer of 2010, for instance, has been partly attributed to market saturation and to unchecked ticket price inflation (Brennan and Webster 2010).

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, my own experience of music industry data for the compilation of the Festival Awards 2010 report illustrated just how nebulous such data could be.

To counter such challenges, Laing (2003a, p. 313) identifies three strategies for the construction of markets where demand can be identified which he uses to examine the record industry but which can equally be used to examine the live music industries; some of these strategies are examined in more detail in Chapters Four and Eight. Firstly, a company can utilise a 'portfolio' approach, in which they promote a wide range of products (live music events) in the expectation that at least some of them will be successful. The second approach identified by Laing is to systematically gather information about consumer preferences and behaviour. The third approach is to influence the various gatekeepers or intermediaries perceived to be influential in consumer decisions, such as disc jockeys and journalists. However, as Laing points out, many musical activities have no connection, or only a tenuous connection, to markets, and there are aspects of the music economy that are surplus or exterior to the market relation (ibid., p. 319).

### ***Occupational careers***

There is currently a lack of research into promotion as an occupation – indeed, into the live music sector in general – although more accurate and up-to-date information is available for those organisations within the funded sector. A report by the National Music Council in November 2002 entitled 'Counting the Notes' estimates that the numbers of people employed exclusively in live non-classical music promotion are relatively small (three hundred people) with eleven thousand people employed by venues (p. 23); four hundred and sixty-eight full- and part-time workers were employed by the Association of British Orchestra members in 1999-2000 (p. 27); and three thousand and thirty-seven permanent and contracted employees worked for one of the five major UK opera companies at this time (p. 33).

However, data for the live music industries regarding careers is particularly problematic as many of the workers are employed on a freelance, contractual or independent basis; live music is often seasonal therefore difficult to quantify accurately over the course of a year. Added to this, the National Audit Office does not have distinct audit – or SIC<sup>9</sup> – codes for live music professionals, making data collection difficult. There is also little

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<sup>9</sup> Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities.

information on how one enters the live music industries, hence while an updated report into the numbers of people employed in the live music sector is beyond the scope of this thesis, an investigation into the career pathways of promoters is undertaken in Chapter Four.

## **Defining live music promoters**

The introduction to this thesis discussed the dearth of literature currently available concerning live music promoters. The final section of the literature review, however, attempts to define the promoter based on what *has* already been published, and draws together the threads already explored throughout the chapter. As has been noted elsewhere, while commentators such as Negus (1992) and Laing (2003b) offer somewhat simplified definitions of what promoters do, live music promoters are, in fact, highly problematic to define; the promoter's role is flexible and not constrained to one single definition or function (Brennan and Webster 2011). For example, from Docherty's autobiographical account of promotion in 1969-71 in Sunderland:-

‘How the hell could anybody call this work?’ I wondered. If somebody asked me what I did for a living, how would I answer them? Stocking bars, changing light bulbs and records, booking groups, shovelling snow, and fighting, none of it a recognised trade. Whatever it was, I didn't want it to stop. It felt too exciting (Docherty 2002, p. 49).

In another example, Bruce (1975, p. 218) suggests that the Director of the Edinburgh Festival – who could be described as the ‘promoter’ – must be ‘a kind of barometer’ as well as being knowledgeable about the Arts, a first-class administrator and ‘a persuader’. Promoters therefore fulfil a number of roles and responsibilities as the organiser (and financier) of live music events, but the shortage of literature necessitates a different approach in their definition.

For this reason, it is worth comparing the role of a live music promoter to other key (often backstage) figures in the arts. Becker's work on the production of culture shows that an ‘art world’ is an ‘established network of cooperative links among participants’ and that works of art are not the products of ‘individual makers’, but are rather ‘joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world's characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence’ (1982, pp. 34-5). Using Becker's analysis, then, promoters could

be thought of as ‘support workers’, doing a ‘specialised task required in the making of the art works in question’ and making themselves available to do it (ibid., p. 77). In this way, a promoter could be said to be serving a similar role to art gallery curators, film producers, theatre bookers, artistic directors, book publishers, museum curators, and comedy promoters. For example, in an article seeking to uncover the practical work of gallery curation, art critic David Sylvester suggested that the most important people in the cultural world are not artists but curators (quoted in Acord 2010, p. 448). Similarly, in an article entitled ‘Curators crowned kings of the art world’, Mark Rappolt, editor of *Art Review*, describes gallery curators as ‘The people who are the top ... are kind of flexible and are able to cope with a world that is rapidly changing ... you need to be flexible to work on a global level’ (quoted in McSmith 2009). These descriptions neatly dovetail with Brennan and Webster’s definition of a promoter as increasingly important, and adaptable and able to ‘wear many hats’.

As shown throughout this chapter and akin to Negus’ definition of record industry staff, then, live music promoters could be described as intermediaries, ‘constantly *mediating* the movements between artists, audiences and corporations’ (Negus 1996, p. 66, emphasis in original). Promoters therefore offer a mediating service to the producer – the artist – for consumption by an audience. However, promoters are unusual in that they simultaneously provide both a service to the artist *and* manufacture a product – an experience – for the audience (Cloonan and Frith 2010); they are both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) industries. This concept is explored further in Chapter Four.

The role of a promoter in selling an *experience* sites them within what Pine and Gilmore (1998) deem the ‘experience economy’ – what could perhaps be described as a subsection of the service industry – therefore different again from the recording industries, say, which sell a comparatively straightforward product.<sup>10</sup> In an article on the production of live music, Cluley posits that a promoter is an ‘engineer of aesthetic experiences’ by organising live music events to attract like-minded people, earning respect among their peers and ‘engineering great moments’ for their audiences (2009, pp. 379-80). Akin to

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that record labels, retailers and brands are diversifying their portfolios to include live music (see for example Wood 2009; Topping 2009; ‘Liberty Media ...’ 2010).

Small's concept of 'musicking' and drawing on Becker's theories of cultural production, Cluley suggests that the experience of live music is not created by musicians alone and that promoters are important figures in shaping the experiences for participants in their live music events (ibid., p. 381). Cluley argues that there are three processes at work in the organisation of live music: 'One is production – investing aesthetic values into a live music event. The second is releasing those values. Finally, once these aesthetic values have been released through aesthetic consumption they must be collected and accounted' (ibid., p. 387). However, Cluley's research focuses on one genre – the alternative rock scene – therefore his generalisations relating to the wider live music industries are perhaps problematic.

A live music promoter could also be defined by using what Becker describes as the 'Wittgenstein Trick' to strip away what is accidentally and contingently part of an idea from what is at its core: 'If I take away from an event or object X some quality Y, what is left?' (Becker 1998, pp. 138-141). Becker uses the example of an art collector and their 'collection' to define why a collector is different to someone who simply owns art works. This can be applied to live music promoters to understand what is left when someone who simply puts on the occasional live music event is taken away from the idea of a 'promoter'. Using Becker's 'trick', a promoter is therefore someone who has the financial and cultural resources (here Becker cites Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital) to choose and promote artists that represent what will turn out to be major trends in music and therefore profitable, whether economically, socially and/or (sub)culturally (Thornton 1995). The artists are merely the 'visible and aural symbols' of the 'decisive action' the promoter has taken by staking money and a reputation for 'sagacity and sensibility' on their choice (Becker 1998, p. 140). This would suggest that a live music promoter is someone who plans an event in order to increase their economic, social and/or cultural capital in both the short- and the long-term.

For a more practical understanding of what promoters do, however, Brennan and Webster (2011) take Laing's definition of a promoter as the bare minimum for the promoter's role: 'The term "promoter" is widely used in the music industry to describe the person or company responsible for the physical organisation and presentation of a concert or festival' (Laing 2003b, p. 561). Laing's definition, however, neglects other vital aspects of the promoter's work – publicity, ticket selling and accounting – and this thesis

shows that the promoter's responsibilities consist of the planning, publicity, *and* production of the live music event.

### ***A typology of live music promoters***

Recent work on the promotion of live music offers a number of promoter typologies relating to how they operate. Cloonan has suggested that there are two types of promoter: 'enthusiasts' and 'employees' (Cloonan 2010). An 'enthusiast' promoter is more likely to have a direct creative input into the event, and Cloonan notes that the opposite is also true, in that for an 'employee', 'the more professional the promoter, the more they are subject to *other people's tastes*' (ibid., n.p., emphasis in original). As the promoter's decisions necessarily become more rational than emotional, the dynamic is usually for a promoter to move from the 'enthusiast' to the 'employee' model. Frith has extended Cloonan's typology and has added a third type: the 'entrepreneur'; often 'independent' and commercially minded.

Brennan has developed this typology to theorise that promoters may also use one of three economic models, based on their underlying motivations and methods of operation (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming). Brennan *et al's* models have parallels with Frith's 1996 model of musical discourses – art, folk, pop – with the caveat that these models of promotion are based on business distinctions rather than ideals *per se*. Hence, the 'state promoter' promotes via subsidy (often not-for-profit and where the event fulfils another aspect of state policy); an 'enthusiast' promotes because they want to, often with no financial motivation (often not-for-profit, but motivated by enthusiasm); and the 'commercial promoter' is profit-motivated (the 'commercial promoter' may invest in the event only or may also invest in a venue) (ibid.). This typology comes with a number of caveats, however. First, the types are not necessarily mutually exclusive due to the blurring of 'public' and 'private', 'amateur' and 'professional'. Second, it should be pointed out that there is also a distinction within the 'state promoter' model between local and national as this affects both where the funding may come from and the promoter's aims and criteria in terms of educational and demographic remits. However, this typology is drawn on extensively throughout this dissertation as a basis for understanding how promoters operate.

To further define the promoter, Brennan and Webster (2011, p. 5) set out three promotional models that a promoter can choose from:-

- i) The 'independent model' whereby the promoter acts as a facilitator and whose income comes via door receipts. The amount of income is based on the share of profits or guaranteed fee that the promoter has arranged to pay the artist, depending on the contractual agreement. The promoter hires the venue and the artist for the event;
- ii) The 'artist-affiliated model' whereby the promoter is linked to the artist in some way (or in some cases, *is* the artist), and therefore collects income from door receipts and performance-associated fees, whether directly or indirectly. The promoter will usually hire the venue for the event;
- iii) The 'venue model' whereby the venue acts as promoter or is provided as an empty shell for external promoters, either hiring the artist for their own event or leasing the venue to another promoter. Even in the latter case income will be made from bar takings and catering.

Both 'independent' and 'artist-affiliated' promoters are 'external' to the venue and are sometimes referred to in this way during the thesis. Combining these models with those set out in the previous paragraph, it is possible to map the promotion of a live music event into a grid as shown below in Table 2-1:-

**Table 2-1: Models of live music promotion**

	Enthusiast promoter	State promoter	Commercial promoter
Independent model			
Artist-affiliated model			
Venue model			

The nine models above are drawn on extensively throughout the thesis. They are not mutually exclusive, however, as a promoter may use different models for different events.

### ***Defining the live music promoter via non-academic sources***

Outside academia, promoters have been defined in a number of industry guides to playing live (Charles 2004; Field 2004; Passman 2004; Beattie 2007; Reynolds 2008), often written from the point of the view of an artist trying to 'make it' in the music business. Industry guides can be useful sources for gauging how those within the industry (or the authors at any rate) perceive the role of the promoter. However, they often describe the promoters' role in purely practical – and sometimes dismissive – terms rather than offering any depth of analysis into the role or motivations of the promoter, and are wont to go out of date due to a rapidly-changing technological and industrial sector. Such guides usually portray the promoter in purely economic terms, whose function is solely to 'hire you for the evening' (Passman 2004, p. 356) or 'put bums/asses on seats' (Reynolds 2008, pp. 22-7).

Promoters have also been defined by the state as a result of the increasing regulation of live music and a number of Competition Commission investigations (Hansard and Academy Music in 2007; Ticketmaster and Live Nation in 2010, for example). The 2010 Competition Commission report offers an in-depth account as to the machinations of the live music industries, albeit much of it based on the (potentially commercially biased) evidence of Live Nation. The report defines the promoter as being 'responsible for organising and promoting an artist's tour (or part of a tour), including contracting with venues, organising advertising, and engaging ticket agents' (Competition Commission 2010b, p. B4).

The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines an event organiser – the person in control of the event – as the 'occupier', the person charged with the safety of the participants. The occupier is therefore responsible for the 'common duty of care' to all their lawful visitors, where the 'duty to take such care ... is reasonable to see that the visitor will be reasonably safe using the premises for the purposes for which he/she is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there' (Occupiers Liability Act 1957 section 2 (2), cited in HSE 1999, p. 185). Unlike previous definitions, the HSE places a legal care of duty on the promoter/occupier to ensure that the premises are safe and, in this sense, the promoter is responsible to both artist and audience to ensure their safety at an event. However, definitions by the state are necessarily pragmatic and focused on regulation,

hence this dissertation seeks to understand promoters and what they do in broader terms.

In the popular press, Bruce's *Festival in the north: the story of the Edinburgh Festival* (1975), Docherty's *A promoter's tale* (2002), Coupe's *The promoters* (2003), and Graham and Greenfield's *My life inside rock and out* (2004) offer anecdotal, auto-biographical accounts of their own experiences of live music promotion. A small number of biographical accounts of promoters also exist, such as Davies' account of the Grade family (1981) or entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Matthew and Harrison 2004), as well as work on specific festivals such as Glastonbury (McKay 2000; Aubrey and Shearlow 2005). The growth of the UK live music industries and the massive increase in festivals (see Brennan and Webster 2010) have also led to a number of articles in the media. In recent years, there have also been an increasing number of biographical pieces in a variety of newspapers, including features about Glastonbury Festival's Emily Eavis in *The Observer* (Asthana 2009), and AEG Live's Rob Hallett in the *Money* section of *The Sunday Times* (Goss 2010). Promoters have also appeared on film, with the Eavis family appearing extensively in an historical documentary about Glastonbury Festival (2006) and in a documentary about the history of UK festivals on *BBC Four* (Britannia 2010). High profile promoters including Raymond Gubbay (2006), Michael Eavis (2008), and Harvey Goldsmith (2009) have also appeared on *BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs* in the first decade of the twenty-first century, again perhaps showing their increased interest to the public as the power shifts within the music industries towards live music (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming).

Finally, the increasing professionalisation of the live music industries has engendered their own conferences (ILMC est. 1988; Live Summit UK est. 2007) and publications, and a number of articles about promoters have appeared in industry magazines such as *IQ Magazine* and *Audience*. Trade magazine *Music Week* has shifted its initial focus on recorded music and retail to include more articles on live music, stating that 'The live scene is more important now than ever' (*Music Week* 2010). The magazine even boasts a dedicated live music journalist, Gordon Masson, and includes 'masterclasses' with promoters such as Michael Eavis (Barrett 2008a) and Harvey Goldsmith (Barrett 2008b). Such accounts are not academic in tone or methodology, however, and are therefore perhaps prone to being celebratory rather than critical (see Williamson, Cloonan and

Frith, in press). Furthermore, such accounts also often focus on the 'live music industries' rather than smaller-scale promoters.<sup>11</sup> The lack of literature around the promotion of live music therefore necessitates the use of such secondary sources, as is discussed in the following chapter.

## Summary

This chapter has investigated what is already known about live music – what it is, why people participate in it, what is already known about its production and those who produce it from behind-the-scenes: the promoters. It has argued that live music is a highly complex social event in which participants seek a (temporally and spatially) unique social and emotional musical experience with a (socially) optimum community of participants, but that in reality involves the conjoining of participants with potentially conflicting interests. Hence the promoter's role is necessarily complex as a result. However, the chapter has also shown that the promoter's role is problematic to define – as is the live music 'industry' within which they operate – hence the role is variable and not constrained to one single definition or function.

Overall, this chapter has shown that too little is already known about the promotion of live music in the UK – indeed, about live music in general – but, as Frith and Cloonan (n.d.) have argued, to understand live music from the promoter's perspective is to get a better understanding of the contemporary music industries as a whole. While the above shows that there is an increasing body of literature around promoters and their roles and responsibilities, there are clear gaps in the understanding and knowledge of these important figures, which this thesis aims to fill. Hence a PhD-length investigation into the work of the live music promoter is both necessary and timely. However, the promotion of live music is inherently covert; it cannot be studied by reading a score or even attending a live music event. Similarly, it cannot be understood disconnected from the live music ecology within which it exists. A variety of ethnographic methods is therefore necessary to fully understand the work of promoters, as is explored in the following chapter.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, articles in *Music Week* describe the live music industry as being renowned for its 'glorious amateurism' (Larkin 2007) and its 'glorious isolation' (Ashton 2011b).

# Chapter Three: Methodology

## Introduction

The main aim of the thesis is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which live music promoters in the UK operate. In order to meet this aim, it is important to determine whether there are common practices for all promoters, and how and to what extent locality affects the promoter's work. To do so, the research focuses on a number of venues in the case study cities of Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol. The findings of the previous chapter, however, are of direct relevance to the methodological choices. In order to outline the approach to case study and participant selection then, Chapter Three now details the narrative of the ethnography.

The rest of this chapter comprises six main sections with which to detail the methodological rationale. The first section establishes my own experiences and interests in the research topic. The second develops the research questions which outline the study and identifies the three main parts of the thesis. The third section outlines the decision as to why the methodological approach was chosen, and the fourth and fifth sections detail the choice of case study cities and venues. Finally, the sixth section turns to the selection of methodological tools, and issues around access, sample size and ethics are also addressed, as are alternative approaches to the chosen methodology.

## Why live music?

I have been fascinated with the backstage workings of live music from an early age, and I have worked professionally in a broad range of musical environments in a number of different roles. After leaving university in 2000, I was an Assistant Musical Director for three Edinburgh Fringe musicals in 2000 and 2001, which involved an element of promotion through flyering extensively on the Royal Mile. When in Sheffield, I worked first for a monthly acid techno night – Headcharge – and a monthly 'world music' night – The JuJu Club – as a Marketing and Events Co-ordinator; after this, I worked as a Marketing Officer for Leeds-based Opera North; and in Canada, I worked for an outdoor musical theatre company, Caravan Farm Theatre. As fan and consumer, employee and volunteer, and more recently, researcher and lecturer, the common thread across all

these identities has been a fascination with how it all works, and why those involved backstage move from being an artist and/or audience member to being a facilitator. The incentive to write about contemporary live music promoters therefore came out of a desire to understand both why other people do so, but also perhaps to understand more about why *I* did. Hence the choice of research field was informed as much by my interests and passions as by a desire to join the Academy. Taking the pragmatic approach advocated by Tashakkori and Teddlie, then, I deliberately studied what interested me and what is of value to me (1998, p. 30).

Two responses were apparent, however, when discussing my research project with other people: from inside the research community, 'That isn't a real PhD!'; and from outside, 'Wow, you can do a PhD in anything these days, can't you!' This epistemological denial (Becker 1998, p. 158) or lack of understanding highlights the novelty of the research but also that PhD topics are expected to be impenetrable, esoteric and unfamiliar. The study of live music has further advantages and disadvantages in that it is something that the majority of people have experience of and opinions about. On the one hand, this means that they engage with the topic, but on the other, it can be difficult to argue a case for the necessity of the research as the assumption is that, as live music is so prevalent, something must be known about the promotion thereof. However, the literature review illustrated how little *is* already known about the production and promotion of live music – indeed, about live music in general – hence the motivation for this ethnographic investigation.

It should be made clear that my PhD studentship forms part of an AHRC-funded project (F00947/1) into the promotion of live music in the UK. My research therefore benefitted from the involvement of other scholars interested in my field – Simon Frith, Martin Cloonan and Matt Brennan – and with whom I was able to share research findings and fieldwork. Also advantageous to my research was my involvement with the preparation of a report for Festival Awards with Brennan, which allowed for a greater understanding of the UK festival market in 2010 (Brennan and Webster 2010).

## Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to provide the groundwork for future scholars, including myself, in order to then be able to examine what promoters do from a number of other perspectives. It sets out to answer three interconnected questions in order to explore the live music event and the promoter's role therein:-

- 1) What is a live music promoter and how do they construct the live music event on behalf of the participants?
- 2) How do promoters both construct and negotiate the live music ecology they work within?
- 3) How does the above impact on the participant experience?

Through these questions, then, the thesis therefore deals with the who, the what, the why and the how of live music promotion, and it does so in three parts, as set out in Chapter One.

## Why ethnography?

I wanted to learn how live music promotion works. In order to do this, I required a flexible methodology that would allow for a number of different methods within an over-arching epistemology, namely that knowledge is 'not won in the library but in the field' (Rock 2001, p. 29) and in which the researcher is the primary research tool. My focus on promoters and how their decisions and actions affect the participant experience also required a methodology that would enable me to observe and talk to all participants within the event, to examine their 'social processes, identities and collective practices' (Cohen 1993, p. 127), hence ethnography was chosen.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It should also be pointed out that the PhD student for the live music project was *intended* to use ethnography, as set out in the AHRC bid, although I greatly changed and enhanced what the co-investigators had originally intended. For instance, Martin Cloonan informed me that himself and Simon Frith had originally expected the PhD student to attend 'a few festivals' and undertake 'a few interviews' (personal communication, 29 June 2011), but my focus on Glasgow, Sheffield, and

Two ethnographic studies in particular provided my methodological rationale: Cohen's *Rock culture in Liverpool: popular music in the making* (1991), and Finnegan's *The hidden musicians: music making in an English town* (2007), as both highlight the benefits of studying local music and its related activities. However, while Finnegan's work is cited as a 'must-read' ethnography (Cloonan 2009, p. 673) and Cohen's as a 'landmark ethnographic study' (Robson 2006, n.p.), both use very different methods. Cohen's work is based on a year's intensive participant observation of two 'rock' bands in Liverpool, whereas Finnegan covered a broad range of genres and practices within Milton Keynes, and she admits that she participated 'much more directly and deeply in some worlds than others' but tried to 'gain some appreciation of them all through a (varied) mix of methods' (2007, p. 343), including participant observation, interviews, and postal questionnaires.

I took from the above that ethnography is flexible and not pinned down to one definition or standardised method, particularly as it is 'often used interchangeably as both a method for research and way of writing' (Krüger 2008, p. 49), as with my own thesis. As Atkinson *et al* state, there is 'little point in trying to generate a definitive list of the core characteristics of ethnography as an approach to social research, or to tie it to restricted disciplinary allegiances' (2001, p. 2). However, they do suggest that 'observation and participation ... remain the characteristic features of the ethnographic approach' but that, in principle, 'the ethnographer may find herself or himself drawing on a very diverse repertoire of research techniques' (*ibid.*, pp. 4-5). Added to this, the flexibility of an ethnographic approach would allow vital scope for readjusting the research design once the research period had commenced, and hence suitable for an investigation into the hitherto unexplored world of live music promotion. Finally, Nader states that the goal of ethnography is to 'grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of the world' and hence is a 'feat of empathy and analysis' (1993, cited in Altheide and Johnson 1998, p. 287). In this way, ethnography was again suitable in order to understand

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Bristol and interviews with a wide range of promoters meant instead that the research was 'infinitely better' than what had been initially envisioned (Frith, personal communication, 23 March 2011).

the decision-making processes of live music promoters; to understand what they do and why they do it.

Moreover, the broad church of ethnography means that there is not one particular theoretical paradigm that must be adhered to, and instead allows for the exploration of a number of different perspectives. Furthermore, as Cohen writes, 'Ethnography is meaningless in the absence of theory, but theoretical models are not simply imposed on field situations and data; rather, they provide an orientation to the research which can be developed by the researcher over the course of analysing data' (1993, pp. 132-3). In this way, the thesis focuses on the fieldwork and critical discussion of the data, rather than the generation of abstract theories, but it also tests the theoretical models of Becker (1982), Frith (1996), Lin (2001) and Brennan *et al* (forthcoming), as set out in Chapter Two.

However, ethnography is far from being an uncontested approach, as indeed with much qualitative research, and there is a long history of epistemological crisis and debate between the so-called 'positivist' and 'interpretivist' paradigms (Holloway 1997, p. 11), most notably documented by Denzin and Lincoln (2008, pp. 18-28). Ethnographic study is traditionally spatially and temporally specific, in which the aim is to produce a description and analysis of what is 'typical' for a particular setting by taking into account the context and conditions under which the phenomena occur (Holloway 1997, p. 79). Hence it may be derided as being too specific to a particular social setting or group to be generalisable to the wider world (Schofield 2002, p. 174), and there is also the issue of attempting to generalise from necessarily limited data collected over a necessarily finite period of time. Finally, the interpretive nature of ethnographic research means that my collection and analysis of the data may be somewhat different to, say, a member of the live music project team or another scholar, who may have a very different worldview from my own. Issues around validity and subjectivity will now be addressed.

The focus of my research is contemporary live music promoters in the UK. In order undertake such research, however, it would obviously be impossible to study all promoters and venues in the UK, and so the study focused on Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol. While this appears broader than the ethnographies of Cohen and Finnegan, say, I took inspiration from Aitkenhead's 2005 ethnographic study of the practices of folk viola

players in England, which focused on Sheffield and the north of England and yet attempted an overview of viola playing across the whole of England and beyond, even drawing on contacts in South America and Australia. Following on from Aitkenhead's broad approach, the aim was therefore to study individuals or organisations that were at the most appropriate levels of their respective industries or cultural activities and therefore the most 'representative' (Tasshakori and Teddlie 1998, p. 63). The strategic selection of promoters and venues within the three case study cities to represent the three types identified by Brennan *et al*, combined with the research generated by Matt Brennan on behalf of the live music project team, the use of a number of methods and relevant research literature, has yielded rich and, I believe, methodologically valid material.

In dealing with claims of 'subjectivity' within qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln argue that 'there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed' as 'any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, p. 25). Ethnography therefore requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher, viewed as 'thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape your research and what you see' (Mason 2002, p. 5).

As Becker (2004) contends, an ethnographer should, if they are to obtain meaningful results, have expertise not only in ethnographic research methods, but also knowledge or expertise in that which is to be studied. As noted above, the motivation for this study came partly from my own experience as a professional in the field, and in this way, I already had an awareness of some of the key issues addressed in this thesis. Upon my return to academia, I was thus more able to understand my previous activities in an academic context, which meant that my prior experience proved an invaluable source of knowledge when devising the questions, analysing the data and writing the thesis. My insider knowledge also allowed me to be aware of practices within the live music event that other participant observers may not be aware of, which meant that I already had some understanding of what a promoter does and the issues they have to contend with. I was therefore able to test my own experiences against those expressed in interviews and this allowed for a greater critical reflection as to what the interviews contained. Added to

this, while interviewees can explain the mechanics involved with putting on a show, my insider knowledge allowed me to understand both the thrills and the terrors associated with live music promotion.

However, it is also necessary to consider how my prior experience may have affected my attitudes towards my research subjects. As Janesick states, 'as researchers, we continually raise awareness of our own biases. There is no attempt to pretend that research is value free' (1998, p. 41). Having only worked for 'state' and 'enthusiast' promoters at a relatively small-scale, I was perhaps slightly partial towards these models, in terms of where my enthusiasms lay and how I regarded the more 'commercial' promoters. However, the advantage of this was that I have been able to give voice to those who, politically and economically, do *not* dominate the 'field of large-scale cultural production' (Bourdieu 1993), whereas the live music project team have tended to focus on promoters within this field, such as Harold Fielding, Harvey Goldsmith, and Geoff Ellis. In this way, I believe that I have considered the impact of my own 'subjectivity' on the analysis, but I believe that this strengthens the thesis by considering promoters outside the live music industries, *per se*.

My dual identity as both promoter and academic researcher raises deeper issues of subjectivity, however, particularly regarding the interpretation of participant observation and interview material. While I was eager to raise the profile of promoters within the Academy, I do not believe that I have over-emphasised their power or influence within the event, and I feel that my conclusions are justifiably based on the data that I collected and analysed. However, if there is an unintentional partiality towards promoters and their work, I hope that I have at least been aware of that possibility within the context of an ethnographic study. Taking all of the above into account, the discussion will now turn to the selection of case study cities and venues.

## **Case study cities**

The first decision to be made was the choice of locality for the ethnographic study. This section therefore first discusses the rationale behind the choice of case study cities, and then compares each one in order to further justify that choice. To begin, then, live music is local music (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming), therefore a local ethnography akin to Cohen's

and Finnegan's was the most appropriate for this field of research, particularly because both studies were within the UK. According to Kirschner (1998, p. 258), however, many 'territorially bound ethnographies ... fail to link intimate accounts of local practices to the bigger picture, reducing complex flows of popular culture to a sort of local determinism'. Promoters are both local *and* non-local, as they import artists from outside their locale, hence studying three different localities therefore enabled me to connect local practices to this 'bigger picture' by ascertaining what common practices and issues, if any, exist within the three cities.

Having spent ten years living in Sheffield, both socialising and working in the local music milieu (Webb 2007), and having many contacts within the city who could be useful to my research, it was felt that Sheffield would be a worthwhile city to study. As I was studying in Glasgow at the time of my research, it was decided that Glasgow would be an obvious choice of city with which to make comparisons to Sheffield. Bristol was chosen as a third city in the south of England as it would offer a potentially useful triangulation regarding the local music ecology. I had some personal experience of Bristol, and anecdotal evidence informed me that the three cities contained enough similarities and differences – highlighted below – to make a comparison worthwhile. While at the start of the research journey I did not know that I would be contributing to three books about the history of live music in the UK since 1950, the fact that I have researched and written about the three cities at certain points in time (1962; 1976; 2007) means that I have a broader historical knowledge of them than perhaps I would have done otherwise.

The choice of cities raises wider research issues, however. Gold (1958) classifies participant observer roles into 'complete participant' and 'participant-as-observer'. I worked for three and a half years for Sheffield-based promoters and therefore have an emic, 'complete participant' perspective of the city. Glasgow and Bristol, on the other hand, were new territories for me. My previous experience within the local live music milieu in Sheffield meant that to many in the city, I was an ex-promoter, while to those in Bristol and Glasgow, I was solely an academic. While there are obvious methodological hazards in the above, I believe that these were outweighed by the benefits, particularly as the contacts I had within Sheffield allowed me to easily access live music personnel in a way that was sometimes more difficult in Bristol and Glasgow. It was therefore felt that

my experiences in Sheffield were too valuable to ignore and every effort was made to remain conscious of the differing levels of involvement at all times.

It could also be argued that a larger or more geographically remote city could have been included in the comparative approach, which may have produced some significantly different results. However, the starting point for the research was Sheffield, as the place in which I had the most contacts and prior experience in live music promotion. While London also seemed an obvious place to study (as the largest city in the UK and home to many in the live music industries), the vast difference in size and spread between Sheffield and London would make meaningful comparisons difficult. Added to this, Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol have strong local and musical identities, whereas London, due to its size and international prominence as a 'global city', is a place of interconnected locales, each with a strong local identity (the boroughs of Camden and Islington, for example).

Comparing Sheffield with a more geographically remote city such as Aberdeen, say, could also have proved useful, particularly for the increased distance from the London-based live music industries. For the first foray into the world of live music promotion, however, the choice of three comparable yet contrasting cities appeared the most fruitful approach, although it would certainly be worthwhile for future research in this field to compare and contrast the experiences of promoters within a city such as London with the more remote Scottish Highlands and Islands, say. Indeed, to more fully understand the promotion of live music from a local, national and international perspective, a wider number of localities would need to be studied, from villages up to mega-cities such as London. It is suggested, however, that the fundamental practices of promoters in the UK remain the same no matter where the location, albeit with variances depending on the local live music ecology. It is likely, therefore, that the outcome of the research would have been slightly different if other cities, towns or villages had been chosen, but that the fundamental practices of the promoter would be unaltered.

The following section now examines the three cities from a variety of perspectives to highlight a number of similarities (and differences) with which to further justify the choice of the three cities as places to contrast and compare within the context of live music promotion.

### ***Location***

Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol are all more than one hundred miles away from London, away from the gravitational pull of the 'mega-city region' (Hall 2004). Glasgow and Bristol are both port cities and the largest cities in their relative localities; Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland, while Bristol is the largest city in the southwest of England; both dominate the local region. Sheffield, on the other hand, is topographically and geographically isolated in the centre of the UK but is surrounded by the large conurbations of Manchester, Leeds and Nottingham, and separated from the west of England by the Peak District.

### ***Population***

In terms of population, Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol all rank among the top ten largest cities in the UK, according to the Office of National Statistics, although of the three, only Glasgow is perhaps in the 'top rank'. Glasgow's population is almost twice the size of Bristol's, while Sheffield is slightly smaller than Glasgow, as can be seen in Table 3-1:-

**Table 3-1: Comparison of Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol**

Local authority	Population <sup>13</sup> (2009 estimates) <sup>14</sup>	Urban area <sup>15</sup>	Population density (persons per hectare)	Distance from London (miles) <sup>16</sup>	Full-time students, aged 16-74	Full-time students (% of 16-74 yr-olds)
<b>Bristol</b> <sup>17</sup>	380,615 (433,100)	551,066	34.77	119	32,140	11.78
<b>Sheffield</b>	513,234 (547,000)	640,720	13.95	168	41,535	11.10
<b>Glasgow</b> <sup>18</sup>	577,869 (588,500)	1,168,270	32.93	403	40,702	7.04

Population statistics by local authority can be misleading, however, as the three cities' *urban* area populations portray a different story, namely that Sheffield and Bristol are closer in size than Sheffield and Glasgow. Taking an even broader view, Bristol's 'larger urban zone' is estimated at 1,006,600, Sheffield's at 1,277,100, and Glasgow's at 1,747,100 (Eurostat 2004), which affects the number of people available from the wider urban region to a promoter. Focusing on population density, it would perhaps be expected that the three city regions would contain a similar ratio, as is the case with Bristol and Glasgow. The fact that Sheffield's city boundaries include parts of the Peak District National Park account for its lower density but again illustrates some of the pitfalls with using Census data. Population density is returned to in Chapter Five in relation to noise.

Demographically, Bristol and Sheffield contain similar proportions<sup>19</sup> of full-time students, and all three cities contain at least two universities; the strong musical identities of the

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<sup>13</sup> All population figures taken from Local Authority, 'City of ...' rather than wider conurbations.

<sup>14</sup> From Table 9 Mid-2009 Population Estimates: Quinary age groups and sex for local authorities in the United Kingdom (ONS 2010a).

<sup>15</sup> Taken from Pointer (2005).

<sup>16</sup> From Google Maps distance calculator.

<sup>17</sup> Data for Bristol and Sheffield taken from the 2001 Census figures (ONS 2010b)

<sup>18</sup> Data for Glasgow taken from SCROL website (2010).

cities can also be a strong incentive to actively encourage students to move there. Universities and colleges can be especially important for live music promoters: on the one hand, students are economically active participants in live music 'scenes'; on the other, university and college buildings may provide important venues within a city (Cohen 1991, p. 18; Frith, Cloonan and Williamson 2009). The proportion of 'non-white' to 'white' inhabitants is increasing in Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol, matching a general trend in the UK since 1991 (ONS 2010c), thus broadening the musical influences and practices available in the cities. While Glasgow now has a larger 'ethnic' population than in previous years, it is still conspicuously smaller than many English cities, particularly that of Bristol, which, because of its links to the slave trade, has a much more embedded African-Caribbean population than many cities in the UK outside of London and Birmingham.

### ***Notions of cultural identity***

Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol each have a unique character, with the distinctive local cultural identity that O'Connor and Banks (1999) argue is essential in a post-industrial economy. The three cities promote themselves as having a reputation as friendly, welcoming places, with Glasgow self-proclaiming itself The Friendly City in 1997 (Glasgow City Council 2005); Bristol being voted the 'smiliest' city in 2003, with Glasgow in second place ('Beaming Bristolians ...' 2003); and Sheffield having a reputation for the being 'the biggest village in England' (University of Sheffield 2011).

However, the self-constructed identities of Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol do not always tally with external perceptions of them and it is worth highlighting the ways in which the three cities are sometimes perceived by outsiders. Sheffield is still known as the 'steel city', perceived by some to fit a dour and grey 'grim up north' stereotype; Bristol is associated with a West Country accent and cider, and, like Sheffield, is sometimes considered provincial and out of the way; Glasgow has the lowest life expectancy in the UK (ONS 2010d) and is perceived by some as a violent and economically deprived city, as shown by the following comedy skit by Miles Jupp in 2010:-

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<sup>19</sup> The method of data analysis between the ONS and SCROL websites may have skewed the Glasgow results here as a similar proportion of students would perhaps have been expected.

Glasgow: absolutely a fantastic city, it really is. Well worth a visit, I would say, certainly from a sociological point of view. In Glasgow, they've actually produced their own version of the classic board game, Monopoly – half the squares have 'Go to Jail' on them! 'Take a Chance', it says, 'Walk through the town centre after dark', that sort of thing. It doesn't have a 'Go' square, it just has a dole office and you can land on it as often as you like, as long as you always use a different name (Friday Night Comedy Podcast 2010).

To counteract such perceptions, city marketing boards attempt to construct new identities through rebranding. Bristol, for example, sees itself as:-

*Unorthodox*, a place that attracts clever and *creative* people, and is a hotbed of *innovation*; Bristol is both *culturally diverse* as well as a place of *cultural excellence*; Bristol aspires to be a truly *sustainable* city; Bristol's character is strongly influenced by its *maritime* heritage. Of these, the single strongest, overriding characteristic that unites and influences all aspects of Bristol's 'personality' is the spirit of *innovation, creativity and unorthodoxy* (Yellow Railroad International Destination Consultancy 2009, emphasis in original).

### ***Post industrialisation and regeneration through the cultural industries***

Each city in the past has been linked to a particular industry and Sheffield (steel) and Glasgow (shipbuilding) especially saw great changes to their economies in the latter half of the twentieth-century as their traditional industrial bases collapsed, leading the city councils to look to the cultural industries as a potential new source of wealth (Brown, Cohen and O'Connor 1998; 2000). Sheffield established a Cultural Industries Quarter following the implementation of the 1994 City Centre Strategy, while Glasgow also turned to the creative industries in order to re-invent itself in the post-industrial age, building the SECC complex in 1985, and the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall in 1990. Bristol's industrial heyday was in the nineteenth, rather than the twentieth-century, and it has not had to re-

invent itself in the same way. It presents itself as an affluent city<sup>20</sup> but, like the others, is still developing its own creative industries economy.<sup>21</sup>

Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol have all put themselves forward for a number of cultural awards over the past twenty years, which shows their desire to rebrand, their confidence and ambition to be regarded in such a way on a national and international stage, and the importance of the creative industries to their economic ambitions. In 2008 Bristol entered the European Capital of Culture shortlist and was deemed 'Britain's most musical city' in 2010 by PRS for Music ('Bristol is ...' 2010)<sup>22</sup>; Glasgow was awarded the European City of Culture in 1990 and the accolade of UNESCO City of Music in 2008; and Sheffield was shortlisted for the UK's first Capital of Culture in 2010. While such awards may not bring the hoped-for economic success, research by García (2005) on Glasgow's 1990 City of Culture award found that the long-term benefits to the city were cultural rather than economic. Rather than mass job creation, the award's strongest legacy was around issues of local images and identities, although judging by Jupp's skit above, external negative perceptions still remain.

The desire to be regarded as culturally important raises the issue of what is required for a 'healthy' cultural city. In work based in the UK, Banks *et al* argue that what is important are the formal and informal networks that connect active participants, held together with 'loosely structured, place-based milieu' which accumulate knowledge and experience and 'generate and reproduce social and cultural capital' (Brown, O'Connor and Cohen 2000, pp. 446-7; also see Banks *et al* 2000); such networks are discussed later in the thesis. NESTA, in work mapping the creative industries, identifies 'creative hotspots' across the

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, while Bristol is often internally and externally regarded as being more affluent than Sheffield, Bristol is ranked sixty-fourth in England in the UK's indices of deprivation while Sheffield is ranked at sixty-third (DCLG 2007). Unfortunately, figures for Glasgow are incomparable due to the different methodology used by the Scottish Government, although Glasgow is ranked as containing some of the most deprived wards in Scotland (Scottish Government 2009a).

<sup>21</sup> According to the Bristol Creative Strategy, the sector has grown so rapidly that they are unable to measure the number of employees in this sector (Bristol City Council n.d.).

<sup>22</sup> Glasgow came fourth below Cardiff and Wakefield ('Bristol is ...' 2010). The results highlight the pitfalls in such research, however, as Wakefield is perhaps not widely regarded as a particularly musical city.

UK where 'a number of creative businesses cluster together to promote economic development and innovation' (Woolman 2010). The list includes Bristol, Edinburgh and Oxford, although, perhaps surprisingly, not Glasgow or Sheffield, particularly as the latter contains a structured Cultural Industries Quarter with precisely that aim.

Frith posits that for a healthy *musical* city, six factors are required: access to music, including music shops and venues; the right sort of spaces for both the production and consumption of music; 'musical time'; opportunities for freelance work; an influx and outflow of people; and a blurring of the boundaries between professional and amateur musicians (Frith 2008d). Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol all contain these factors to a greater or lesser extent, partly due to the size of the population and partly for historical reasons. As stated in the introduction, Frith, Cloonan and Williamson (2009) also theorise that there needs to be an 'ecology of live music' whereby a range of venues (small, large, 'professional', 'amateur') must exist in order for new talent to be allowed to develop, as well as an environment in which there can be an overlapping of these 'amateur' and 'professional' spheres. Adding to this, cities need a network of musical pathways around them that are 'on the beaten track' and 'off the beaten track', namely those that are relatively easy to find and those that require more effort or are relatively hidden. One of the underlying arguments of this thesis is that promoters also play a role in the 'health' and diversity of the ecology because they are cultural investors (and exploiters), importers and innovators who both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology within which they operate. Therefore to further add to Frith's factors for a healthy musical city, a variety of promoters is also required to assist the creation and development of the pathways described by Finnegan (2007). Such themes are drawn on throughout the thesis in relation to the three case study cities.

## ***Music***

Musically, Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol are perceived internally and externally as having particularly vibrant 'local scenes' (Bennett and Peterson 2004); there is a great deal of music on offer within the cities but each has also been recognised for its musical output beyond the locale. All three cities have had a varying degree of national press interest over the years, with the popular music 'scene bubble' (Radio 1 Stories 2005) attaching itself to all three cities at various times from the 1980s to the present day: Sheffield with

electronica in the 1980s and 1990s, and 'New Yorkshire' in the mid 2000s; Bristol with trip hop in the mid 1990s; and Glasgow with Postcard Records in the 1980s, and the successes of Franz Ferdinand and Glasvegas in the mid to late 2000s.

The three cities have varying infrastructures relating to musical provision. Work by Williamson, Cloonan and Frith (2003) found that the live sector in Scotland is the healthiest part of the music industries in the country – a finding that provided the impetus for the AHRC-funded live music project – and global promotional companies such as Live Nation continue to develop their investment in Scotland (Lyons and Sutherland 2008). Glasgow is home to the Scottish Music Centre, which provides training sessions, outreach programmes, and library resources for those working in the music sectors; the Scottish Music Industry Association; the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (SSO); the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO); and Scottish Opera. Bristol and Glasgow both house significant BBC departments in the cities outside the main hubs of London and Manchester, while Sheffield contains a smaller department. The presence of the BBC can be significant both for the production of music radio and providing work and exposure for musicians in the city. Bristol houses the Bristol Institute of Modern Music (BIMM) and the Bristol Music Foundation (BMF) which aims to support and educate music industry personnel. Sheffield is a relatively small city with a long history of producing internationally renowned music such as Pulp and Arctic Monkeys. Sheffield has no resident orchestra, however, although it is home to a very well-regarded theatre company (The Crucible), was the site of the ill-fated National Centre for Popular Music (NCPM), and houses the afore-mentioned Cultural Industries Quarter. The three cities are each within less than fifty miles from three major summer rock/pop festivals<sup>23</sup> and each contain their own festivals within the city boundaries which are either music-centred or include music in some form.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bristol is approximately twenty miles from Glastonbury Festival; Glasgow is approximately forty miles from T in the Park; and Sheffield is approximately thirty-five miles from Leeds Festival (data from Google Maps).

<sup>24</sup> These include: the Bristol Harbour Festival and BrisFest, which took over from the Ashton Court Festival in 2008; the Glasgow International Jazz Festival, Celtic Connections and the Glasgow West End Festival; and Tramlines in Sheffield which began in 2009.

### ***Mapping the promotion of live music***

As stated above, promoters both shape and are shaped by the unique local live music ecology within which they operate. Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol are therefore different in terms of the major venues and promoters within each city. Each city contains a delicate balance of 'state', 'commercial', and 'enthusiast' promoters and venues, which is constantly changing due to shifts in venue ownership and movement of people in and out of the cities. This section therefore offers a brief summary of the major promoters and venues at the time of the research period. At the time of writing, each city hosts events promoted by major regional 'commercial' promoters (DF Concerts, Regular Music and PCL in Glasgow; SJM in Sheffield; SJM/Metropolis in Bristol), although out of the three, Sheffield is the only one which does not house the business office of a 'major' promoter.<sup>25</sup> DF, SJM and Metropolis are linked to Live Nation and Gaiety Investments via the convoluted ownership structures within the UK's live music industries, as is examined in Chapter Six.

Locally and nationally (and internationally) renowned live music venues include King Tut's Wah Wah Hut and the Barrowlands in Glasgow, the Leadmill in Sheffield, and the Thekla in Bristol, all part of the mythology of each city and important partly because of their relative longevity. Each city now also contains an O<sub>2</sub> Academy, part of the Academy Music Group owned by Live Nation-Gaiety, SJM, and Metropolis (Competition Commission 2010b, p. D2). While Sheffield and Glasgow both contain large arenas, Bristol does not, which means that arena-sized acts may play in nearby Cardiff. Each city houses a large municipal concert hall – Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall, Sheffield's City Hall, and Bristol's Colston Hall – but each are owned and managed differently.<sup>26</sup> Each hall's programme contains a combination of internally and externally promoted live music events from a

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<sup>25</sup> It should be pointed out that Metropolis has a small office in Bristol while its major office is based in London.

<sup>26</sup> Sheffield's City Hall is wholly owned by The Sheffield City Trust, a charitable limited company which is in turn funded via its three wholly owned subsidiaries: Sheffield International Venues Ltd, Sheffield City Hall Limited and Sheffield Festival Limited (Sheffield City Trust 2005). The City Hall and Motorpoint Arena are currently managed by Live Nation. In Bristol, the council currently owns and manages the main venue in the city, Colston Hall. Details of the ownership and management of Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall can be found in Table 3-2.

wide range of genres, promoted by a mixture of 'commercial', 'state' and 'enthusiast' promoters. Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol also contain plenty of 'enthusiast' promoters, and each city houses a strong DIY culture. Sheffield and Bristol contain particularly notable 'underground' dance cultures. Thus the three cities contain enough similarities and differences to make them worthwhile places to study in the context of live music promotion.

## **Case study venues**

The next decision to be made was the choice of case study venues, a case study being an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin 2003). Multiple case study venues were chosen in order to be able to compare a number of different 'genre cultures' (Negus 1999, pp. 24-30), audience types, and participant structures within the same space, and to compare these across the case study venues. Of course, case studies are inherently problematic as the case study will not represent, in microcosmic form, the macrocosm intended. As Becker states (1998, p. 67), case studies are 'a kind of synecdoche', in which the case study is taken 'to represent, meaningfully, the whole from which it was drawn'. However, case studies can be illustrative rather than representative, and, as Yin points out, 'The case study does not represent a sample and, in doing a case study, [the] goal will be to expand and generalise theories and not to enumerate frequencies' (2003, p. 10). With this in mind, I approached each case study as methodically as possible, noting similar categories of observations at each venue, and asking audience members and venue staff the same (or similar) questions in order to elicit comparable results across the case studies. The generalisability of the case study venues was increased by their strategic selection, as shown below.

My broad musical background meant that I had prior knowledge of a wide range of venues and musical genres and a lifetime of live music events to draw on for my research. This was important both for the necessity of observing relatively inconspicuously (i.e. dressing appropriately for the genre culture and venue) and being able to converse knowledgeably with audience members, artists and event personnel in order to gain their trust and engage their interest in my research. A cross-genre approach would also increase the generalisability about the promotion of live music more so than if I had concentrated on one genre or venue. The size and location of the venue was also of

importance and I wanted a spread of both Frith's and Reynolds' typologies of venues<sup>27</sup> in order to glean the similarities and differences facing those who promote in such venues. The rationale behind the choice was also to obtain a wide spread of ownership, music genres, audience types, layouts, interactions, and participant spectatorship. The full list of live music events attended can be found in Appendix One. Table 3-2 shows the choice of case study venues; research dates; maximum capacities; average number of events in a year; history; the owner/operator; regular promoters; genres; a selection of artists seen during the research dates; the number of audience interviewees at each venue; and how the venues perceive themselves:-

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Seven for discussion of these typologies.

**Table 3-2: Case study venues in detail**

Name	Location	Research dates	Maximum Capacity	Average number of events per year	Frith (2008b) / Reynolds (2008) Venue Types	History	Owner / Operator	Regular promoters	Genres	Selection of artists seen during research	Number of audience interviews
<b>King Tut's Wah Wah Hut</b>	St Vincent Street, <b>Glasgow</b>	13 events between 19/05/09 and 09/06/09	300	c. 300	Music determined / Music bar or pub	Opened as King Tut's in 1990; previously known as Saints and Sinners	DF Concerts <sup>28</sup> / DF Concerts	DF Concerts	Includes indie, rock, dance, singer songwriters, and folk rock	The Breeders, The Horrors, Unicorn Kid, Kristin Hersh, Lady Sovereign	82
	'King Tut's Wah Wah Hut is one of Glasgow's leading concert venues, renowned in Scotland as an exciting showcase for new and emerging bands and as the venue that supported some of the UK music industry's biggest names at the start of their careers' (King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 2010).										
<b>Glasgow Royal Concert Hall</b>	Sauchiehall Street, <b>Glasgow</b>	13 events between 01/12/09 and 14/12/09	2,478	400 concerts and 1,000 corporate events	Music determined / Large theatre	Opened in 1990 to coincide with Glasgow European City of Culture	Glasgow City Council and Scottish Enterprise / Glasgow Life <sup>29</sup>	RSNO, Raymond Gubbay, DF Concerts, Regular Music, Live Nation, SJM	Includes classical, folk, world, country, rock and pop	RSNO, The Bootleg Beatles, Ray Davies, East Dunbartonshire Christmas Concert	87
	'The best in classical, world music and popular entertainment' (Glasgow's Concert Halls 2010).										

<sup>28</sup> DF Holdings (DFC) – which is the holding company for a number of live music businesses operating in Scotland, including DF Concerts, the promoter of the T in the Park festival – is majority owned by Live Nation-Gaiety (78.33%), with the remaining shares held by Simon Moran of SJM (19.17%) and Geoff Ellis, director of DF Concerts (2.5%) (Competition Commission 2010b, p. D3).

<sup>29</sup> In Glasgow as of 1 April 2010, the management and operation of The Royal Concert Hall, City Halls and Old Fruitmarket was transferred to Glasgow Life, the operating name of Culture and Sport Glasgow. Glasgow Life is a charitable company and was outsourced by Glasgow City Council in 2008 to manage the city's cultural, leisure and outdoor recreation services (Winckles 2010).

<b>Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC)</b>	Finnieston Quay, <b>Glasgow</b>	7 events between 02/03/10 and 13/03/10	10,000 (Hall Four) 3,000 (Clyde Auditorium)	Varies per year but c. 100	Music related, leisure determined, (non)-commercial / Arena	SECC opened in 1985; Clyde Auditorium opened in 1997	Scottish Exhibition Centre Ltd (SEC Ltd) <sup>30</sup> / SEC Ltd	AEG Live, Live Nation, DF Concerts, Regular Music	Mainly rock and pop	Stereophonics, Katherine Jenkins, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Elvis in Concert	58
	'The Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) is Scotland's premier national venue for public events, concerts and conferences' (SECC 2010a).										
<b>Fagan's (pub)</b>	Broad Lane, <b>Sheffield</b>	9 events between 29/06/09 and 11/07/09	160 (entire pub)	Music five days a week, therefore c. 250	Music related, leisure determined, commercial / Bar, pub	Opened as Fagan's in 1985; previously known as The Barrel	Punch Taverns <sup>31</sup> / Tom Boulding (landlord)	Variety of 'session hosts' paid £25 by landlord	Folk	Tegi Roberts, Pat Walker, Trevor Thomas	10
	n/a.										
<b>Sharrow Community Festival</b>	Mount Pleasant Park, <b>Sheffield</b>	1 event on 04/07/09	c. 7,000	One with occasional fringe events	Useable spaces not designed or usually used for music / Outdoor	First festival in 1998	Sheffield City Council: Parks and Countryside / Sharrow Community Festival	Sharrow Community Festival	Includes 'world', singer songwriters, reggae, hip hop, etc.	Robert Maseko and The Congo Beat, Na-Zdrove, Abelwell	14
	Aims to 'celebrate everything that's good about the area' ('Festival spirit in Sharrow' 2010).										

<sup>30</sup> Scottish Exhibition Centre Ltd (SEC Ltd) is a private Scottish company limited by shares. Glasgow City Council is the largest shareholder with 90% (Harwood 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Punch Taverns is a large pub company in the UK, with 6,770 pubs across its leased and managed portfolio (Punch Taverns n.d.).

<b>St George's Bristol</b>	Great George Street, Off Park Street, <b>Bristol</b>	13 events between 01/10/09 and 14/10/09	562	c. 200	Music determined / Music venue	Church built 1821-3; St George's Music Trust formed in 1976; building refurbished and renamed as St George's Bristol in 1999	Church of England / St George's Bristol	St Georges Bristol (120-140 events a year); local orchestras and smaller promoters	Classical, jazz, folk, and 'world music'	Paul Lewis, Brodsky Quartet, Adrian Edmondson and the Bad Seeds	78
	'One of Britain's leading concert halls and recording studios, famous for its exceptionally fine acoustic. The world's best in classical, jazz, world music and opera' (St George's Bristol, n.d.).										
<b>Lakota</b>	Upper York Street, Stokes Croft, <b>Bristol</b>	5 events between 26/03/10 and 04/04/10	1,200 spread out over three floors and four arenas	Open most weekend nights till 4-6am, therefore c. 100-120	Music determined / Large club	Opened in 1989	Marti and Bentleigh Burgess / Mike Ind and Dave Chapman	Tribe of Frog, Ravers Are Extreme, Fracture Clinic, Jungle Syndicate, Relapse	Trance, techno, drum&bass, and dubstep	Aphrodite, Aphid Mood, Si McLean, Acid Ted, Moonquake	34
	'Lakota is an underground music venue. Do not come to Lakota if you are expecting to hear the run of the mill chart music. Do come if you want your ears to bleed and if you want to dance all night amongst kindred spirits' (Lakota, n.d.).										
<b>Mr Wolfs</b>	St Stephen's Street, <b>Bristol</b>	7 events between 29/03/10 and 08/03/10	120	Open 7 nights a week, therefore c. 350	Music related, leisure determined, commercial / Music bar or pub	Opened in 2002, originally as a vegetarian restaurant which then expanded its musical offering	Mark Wolf / Mark Wolf	Mr Wolfs, SongSmith, Project 13, Ole Vybzl, Cleverhead	Live music (open mic, local bands, hip hop, etc.) and after-hours DJ parties (funk, hip hop, etc.)	The Evil Beat, Muff Said, Samantha Maris Band, MC Chalk, DJ Sho'Nuff	40
	'A unique, independent bar and live music venue and noodle bar, at the heart of the thriving Bristol music scene. Supporting a diversity of new musical talent Mr Wolf's has had the privilege to showcase some of Bristol's best acts' (Mr Wolfs 2011).										

## **Conducting the research**

The following section now details the selection and use of the methodological tools employed. As stated above, the study of a hitherto unexplored and often covert world such as live music promotion required a flexible approach that combined a number of different methods, which for this study included participant observation and interviews, but also textual analysis. As Flick points out, 'different theoretical perspectives can be understood as different ways of accessing the phenomenon under study ... Starting from this understanding, different research perspectives may be combined and supplemented' to form a 'triangulation of perspectives' (1998, p. 25). This chimes with Becker's concept of the 'researcher-as-bricoleur', wherein the researcher 'uses aesthetic and material tools ... deploying whatever strategies, methods and empirical methods are at hand' (1998, p. 2). In this way, the synthesis of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials and perspectives adds 'rigour, breadth, and depth' to my research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, p. 4). Moreover, Tasshakori and Teddlie offer a number of activities which can collectively be combined to further increase the 'credibility' and hence 'trustworthiness' of the research (1998, pp. 90-3). These include prolonged engagement; persistent observation; use of triangulation techniques; and a dependability audit (ibid.), or, as Krüger suggests, 'being a fly in the soup' by providing evidence upon which researchers' interpretations are based 'so as to make public how they come to know what they know' (2008, p. 69). Evidence of such activities is provided throughout the rest of this chapter.

### ***Participant observation***

As Rock (2001, p. 32) suggests, 'interactionist research hinges on participant observation: that it is only by attempting to enter the symbolic life-world of others that one can ascertain the subjective logic on which it is built, to feel, hear and see a little of social life as one's subjects do'. In order to understand how a promoter produces the event and influences the participant experience, participant observation was therefore undertaken in order to triangulate what promoters said in interviews against what was observed at the venue and said by participants therein. At other times, interviews with venue staff were undertaken after the event in order to question aspects of the event I had attended and to clarify or disprove assumptions that I had made.

Participant observation at eight case study venues and at nearly seventy live music events meant that a wide range of genres, venues, participant structures, audiences and artists were experienced. One issue was access. At all venues, staff were informed of my presence for two reasons: first, staff collusion meant that my research was unhindered, particularly at larger venues, such as the SECC, which are particularly strict over such matters; and second, I was able to obtain free tickets to all but one of the events I attended as a result of contacting the venue or relevant promoters in advance, which has saved me a couple of thousand pounds. Access to events was therefore not an issue, and I was sometimes surprised at the level of access allowed to me. For example, I was allowed backstage access to a Stereophonics show at Glasgow's SECC and introduced to many heads of department, who then agreed to be interviewed. However, participant observation of promoters themselves at events was generally not possible due to commercial sensitivities, therefore much of their role had to be surmised from interviews and participant observation at their events.

The participation observation was as covert as possible so as to help to eliminate associated problems of reactivity in the subjects. Audience members were often intrigued, however, by what I was writing in my notebook, some confusing me for a journalist, which had benefits as they sometimes made space for me in crowded venues. Other times my note-taking (often in the dark) aroused suspicions, particularly at places where drug-taking was occurring. As a participant observer, note-taking can also be problematic because an attempt at straight description can tend towards 'unintentional analytic summarising' (Becker 1998, p. 7). However, as far as possible, my own note-taking attempted to describe as much detail as I could see and write, focusing on the overt and covert signals between artists, audiences, and event personnel or venue staff.

As soon as possible after each event, I wrote up my notes and highlighted certain parts with additional comments that occurred to me after the event. I then divided the notes into the following areas: general comments about the venue; programming/start times/show times; general comments about audience behaviour – before, during and after the event; comments about the signals between audience, venue, and artist (audience-audience, artist-artist, venue-venue, artist-audience, artist-venue, venue-audience); comparison of a number of events in each venue; and anything else of interest. These notes were then written up and condensed, using much the same

headings, in order to share them with the live music project team, thereby further increasing the 'confirmability' of the research (Tasshakori and Teddlie 1998, p. 90). These written up notes then formed the core of the final section of the thesis, as they referred to aspects concerning the planning and production of the event in particular.

Direct participant observation of the work of promoters *before* the event would not have been possible and therefore was not attempted in this research. Much of what promoters do before an event is office-based or based on telephone or face-to-face contact with other actors within the event, therefore my presence at these meetings would have impacted heavily on the nature of what was said and done, and could have raised issues of commercial sensitivity. Instead, I draw on my extensive prior experience of live music promotion to understand how such relationships work, which helped to shape the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews with contemporary promoters in order to understand the planning and publicity stages of the event.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

A large part of this thesis is based on interviews with relevant industry personnel, such as promoters, venue owners/managers, security staff, and technical personnel, which allows for a phenomenological perspective of what they do and how they do it.<sup>32</sup> These interviewees can therefore be classified into two categories: first, staff at the case study venues (see Appendix Two); and second, relevant live music personnel within each city and beyond (see Appendix Three), again to access a wide range of genres but also promoter types. Such personnel were selected partly based on my insider knowledge, partly based on recommendations and contacts from previous interviewees, and partly based on their availability and willingness to engage in my research. Each interview was transcribed in detail by myself and therefore nuances, pauses and emphases could be recorded. The interviews were semi-structured in order to give both flexibility and consistency, but also to ensure that the research could develop and follow new lines of enquiry if necessary that were not apparent at the outset of the research period. After transcription, I (loosely) coded the majority of my interviews, assigning codes and then themes to the transcripts. I then combined the coded interviews under themes in order

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<sup>32</sup> It should also be pointed out that this dissertation also draws on interviews undertaken by my colleague, Matt Brennan, for the live music project.

to draw on them again when I came to writing up, and, in this way, was guided towards the areas that I focused on in the final thesis from what interviewees had said. All interviews were passed on to the live music project team, again increasing the 'confirmability' of the research.

I carried out formal and informal semi-structured interviews with forty staff across the case study venues, and thirty interviews with live music personnel from Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol (and Edinburgh). The interview questions (see Appendix Four) were chosen to cover as broad a base as possible and were organised into the following sections to gain a sense of the processes involved in live music promotion:-

- Basic information about the interviewee, including how they first became involved with live music and their current job title and responsibilities;
- Questions about participant behaviour and management;
- The interviewee's own perceptions as to why audiences attend live music events;
- Questions about the interviewee's particular locale and networks;
- General questions relating to government policy and the wider (live) music industries.

Interviewees with case study venue employees were deliberately less general than the external interviews and more specific about observations made during the research period, hence the focus tended to be on practical rather than personal issues for many of these. I was then able to map their explanations about certain phenomena on to the fieldwork notes.

The number of questions depended on the length of the interview, which often depended on the time of day and the location of the interview; those interviewed at work were generally less generous with their time than those interviewed in external locations, for example. The varying length of the interviews meant that certain questions had to be missed out and others focused on, therefore the depth of questioning was variable, with some interviews lasting thirty minutes and others lasting up to three hours. However, many of the interviewees spoke for longer than they had intended, and the majority of

the interviewees were happy to be contacted again after the event in order to clarify any particular points or issues. The lack of research into live music promotion meant that the field is not yet saturated and I was generally surprised both at how willing interviewees were to talk to me and how much information and time they gave.<sup>33</sup> The majority of staff at my case study venues appeared genuinely interested in my research and willing to talk.<sup>34</sup>

As a result of my contacts within Sheffield, I had personal relationships with some interviewees but not others, which can be problematic as it may be difficult to report negatively about friends or colleagues. As Becker and Faulkner (2008, pp. 15-21) warn:-

Studying something you are a part of, and interviewing people who you have worked with and will work with again raises difficult questions that fieldworkers in more traditional research situations don't have to address but, at the same time, offers wonderful possibilities for data gathering not open in the same way to outsiders.

In Sheffield, for instance, I was able to ask in-depth questions about particular aspects of some interviewees' work as a result of my insider knowledge. The majority of my early interviews took place in Sheffield, therefore I was able to draw on what I had learnt there for my Glasgow and Bristol interviews.

Interviews can be problematic, however. As Negus (1999, p. 11) writes, interviews are not about 'extracting' information or truths; rather, an interview is an 'active social encounter' through which knowledge is produced via a process of exchange and which involves 'communication, interpretation, understanding, and, occasionally perhaps, misunderstanding'. Becker (1998, p. 91) cautions that interviewers should 'doubt everything anyone in power tells you' and therefore a degree of scepticism is required. Organisations are, of course, bound to put their best foot forward and a number of times, interviewees asked that transcripts be edited to delete or anonymise certain sections

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted, however, that some interviewees required an introduction by another promoter, but that once an 'in' was established, access became easier.

<sup>34</sup> At only one venue did there appear to be 'research fatigue': Fagan's folk pub in Sheffield. The University of Sheffield's Music Department is renowned for its ethnomusicological research, and the close vicinity of Fagan's to the department goes some way to explaining the lack of surprise given to me by the attendees.

which threw a darker light on the interviewee's employer or practices. For this reason, I deliberately attempted to speak to those staff in an organisation who were not necessarily at the top, in order to glean a fuller, and sometimes more honest, appraisal of the organisation. A number of unsurprising narratives were also apparent, such as a general unwillingness to admit any financial motivations for promoting, most likely as a desire to remain 'authentic' in a sector that professes to be 'all about the music, man'. There was therefore a risk in taking what interviewees said at face-value, particularly as some of the issues raised could have been personally, professionally, or commercially sensitive, and hence evaded. I therefore necessarily had to find other means to develop and support my own evaluation of what interviewees were telling me, which included speaking to artists, audiences, backstage crew and venue staff, as is now described.

### ***Mini-interviews with artists and audiences***

As far as possible, I also interviewed artists who both performed at the case study venues and who were external to them, in order to triangulate the data. However, contact with artists was sporadic and limited as a result of the number of intermediaries between promoter and artist. Email questionnaires were also sent to artists known personally to me to counteract this. Audience research in the form of mini-interviews also made up a large part of my research, and audience members were selected at each event I attended at the case study venues by their willingness to participate and, as far as possible, to reflect the demographic of that particular event.

In order to ascertain from audience members what motivated them about the events they attended, I spoke to four hundred and three people across the case study venues, and noted down what they said (see Table 3-2 for a breakdown of figures for each venue). The questions were chosen to be incrementally engrossing, starting with simple questions about name, age, and whether they had attended the venue before, to why they attended live music events in general and how they understood how to behave (see Appendix Five). I made notes during the interviews, rather than recording them, and wrote these up as soon as possible after the event, looking for themes but also particularly relevant comments that I could draw on at a later date. While the questions remained relatively identical from venue to venue, there were occasions where they needed to change slightly, often due to the inebriated state of the audience member or

loud volume negatively impacting on one's ability to hear. If an audience member appeared particularly engaged with my research topic, I tended to linger to probe more deeply; on a number of occasions, however, the audience member appeared to want to talk to me indefinitely and I had to extricate myself politely.

As a thirty year-old female attending venues on my own at night, it was naturally easier to approach couples rather than large groups, particularly as the questions required a concentrated period of around five minutes per person. Larger social groups – more interested in talking to each other than with me – could be problematic to interview, although there are a number of group interviews in my research. My aforementioned wide musical background allowed me to talk with both clubbers and symphony concert-goers, and I believe that the breadth of research I have obtained would be difficult for another researcher to achieve. There are not that many researchers, I imagine, who are able to talk knowledgeably about psy-trance, The Breeders and Schubert, for example. Fitting in at the event was also an issue, in terms of what I wore and how I spoke, hence more glottal stops in my speech and scruffy trousers appearing when attending events with a younger demographic. Other issues were temporal, as in when the event started. Clubs, for example, demand fluid temporal interaction and audience interviews could take place throughout the event; the rigid start times and silent interaction demanded in the classical concert environment, on the other hand, meant that mini-interviews had to take place before or after the concert or in the interval.

### ***Online survey***

An online survey for audience members was designed using free online survey software (SurveyGizmo). The online survey was designed as a follow-up to the mini audience interviews at case study venues, and email addresses were collected in order to contact the interviewee after the event. In this way, I was able to gain a greater depth of knowledge about audience motivation and the audience-promoter relationship than was possible in the five minute face-to-face interviews. As Bernard states:-

Self-administered questionnaires are preferable to personal interviews when three conditions are met: (1) You are dealing with literate respondents; (2) you are confident of getting a high response rate (at least 70%); and (3) the questions you want to ask do not require a face-to-face interview or the use of visual aids such as cue cards, charts, and the like. Under these

circumstances, you get much more information for your time and money than from the other methods of questionnaire administration (2000, p. 237).

As I had already met the majority of the respondents personally, I knew that they were literate, able to use a computer – they had given me an email address – and willing to carry out the questionnaire. Indeed, some respondents forwarded the survey on to friends and colleagues, which meant that the total response to the online questionnaire was three hundred and seventeen. The questions were chosen to elicit responses about a number of aspects around live music: questions about the respondent's first live music event attended; the last event they attended; their motivations for attendance; and other topics.<sup>35</sup> The survey combined qualitative and quantitative responses but it was the open-ended qualitative responses that elicited the most useful data as the majority of this dissertation is based on qualitative rather than quantitative research. All respondents' data has been anonymised and referred to in the text with the reference OSRXXX (Online Survey Respondent XXX). The online survey software had a facility to produce a report containing graphs, pie charts, and 'essay' answers, so analysis of the data was relatively straightforward.

### ***Textual analysis***

A simple frequency analysis was used to analyse publicity material from a number of the case study venues in order to highlight the use of certain words by certain venues. The textual analysis on the venues' season brochures was done by scanning the relevant piece of print into the computer, or using what the venues sent me (usually PDFs or Word documents) of the season or month's events. After removing the technical details (date, time, artist, etc.), a free online program (TaPor<sup>36</sup>) was used to do a simple frequency analysis of the words used most frequently by each venue, with which I then constructed a table comparing each venue.

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<sup>35</sup> The complete survey can be accessed here: <<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/141928/music-based-events-survey>>

<sup>36</sup> The Text Analysis Portal for Research can be accessed here: <http://taporware.mcmaster.ca/>

## ***Secondary sources***

The relative lack of literature around live music and promoters in the UK meant that it was necessary to draw on a variety of secondary sources in the media, as discussed in the literature review. These included articles in trade publications such as *Music Week*, and an increasing number of articles in print and online publications such as the *BBC* website and broadsheet newspapers such as *The Guardian*.

## **Ethical issues**

Writing a thesis necessarily requires the exploitation of the knowledge and experiences of people who receive no tangible rewards. As a result, I believe that researchers should therefore attempt to 'equalise the power imbalance' (Aitkenhead 2005, p. 37) between the researcher and the researched as far as possible. In order to do this, all interviewees were given the option to be anonymised, which has been honoured in all cases. There are some interviewees who did not specifically ask to be anonymised but for whom some of the data appeared controversial or commercially confidential, and they have been anonymised by myself. All interviewees were also given the option to read over their transcribed interview, which some of them did. Interviewees were then able to edit the transcript to remove anything that could be commercially or professionally sensitive; this has meant that while I have used sections edited out by the interviewee, these have not been attributed to them in order to preserve their anonymity. Finally, all research participants were asked to read and sign a form consenting to the use of their data, which detailed how and where such data may be used and confirmed the protection of their rights with reference to the University of Glasgow's ethical procedures (see Appendix Six). In this way, I hope to have left the field as I found it and not caused any damage for future researchers.

## **Alternative approaches**

In order to answer the questions posed earlier in the chapter, alternative approaches to finding out about live music promotion could have included the following. A historiographic or archival account could have been attempted, in order to ascertain how the promotion of live music has developed into the form it is in today. However, this would have caused considerable overlap between my work and the work of the project

team, particularly as my role as the PhD student was to capture data relating to contemporary promoters. Another alternative approach could have been to undertake a detailed content analysis of secondary sources such as those set out in Chapter Two. As discussed in that chapter, however, there is a dearth of literature around the current practices of promoters, and such an approach would have been somewhat limited and hence unsatisfactory, particularly as media accounts tend to focus on the higher echelons of the industries and hence would have neglected to take into account the 'hidden promoters', or those within the 'field of restricted production' (Bourdieu 1993). It also proved difficult to source company's internal reports and other documents, therefore analysis would have had to have been purely on promoters' externally produced press releases and media accounts.

A final approach could have been to base the research purely on an online survey aimed at live music promoters, rather than on face-to-face semi-structured interviews. While on the one hand, this could have resulted in a greater sample size and for a more statistical analysis of what it is that promoters do, on the other, such an approach would have required a higher level of motivation from respondents, less flexible questioning, and the possibility of *fewer* responses. I did not have pre-existing personal relationships with the vast majority of interviewees, therefore the issue of motivation could have been a problem, which face-to-face interviews bypass through personal and temporally fixed contact. The inflexibility of a questionnaire would also have meant that although I wanted to address similar issues with all of the interviewees, the form of questions necessarily had to be different for such a wide range of promoters and practices.

Thus it was felt that none of these methods alone would have yielded such rich data or to be able to distinguish between "public" discourse, "private" narratives and local practice' (Robson 2006, n.p.) that is possible via the triangulation of the perspectives and methods chosen.

## **Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated the methodological underpinnings which have guided the research design of the study. A rationale for the selection of an ethnographic approach has been outlined alongside the specific tools chosen to investigate the research

questions. The chapter has shown that the selection of case studies was undertaken in order to compare and contrast the practices of promoters within each one. By employing a variety of ethnographic methods, the data from the case study cities (relating to the live music ecology), the case study venues (participant observation, mini audience interviews, semi-structured in-depth personnel interviews), and non-case study interviewees can be triangulated. As explained, the research uses a mixed methods approach in order to provide a fuller account of the promotion of live music and highlight broader issues at play within the physical, regulatory, and economic landscape. What follows now is the presentation of the empirical findings of the research, beginning with a phenomenology of both what promoters are and why and how they become promoters.

# Part One: Chapter Four: Defining the promoter

## Introduction

Chapter Two sought to define promoters as others see them: scholars, the state, biographers, the media, and the music industries. However, as existing accounts of what a promoter is and/or does are currently scarce, the first task is to elaborate on the pre-existing definitions of promoters. This chapter does so by using a phenomenological perspective – or first-person view – from promoters themselves. This chapter therefore builds on the justification of research methods detailed in the previous chapter: that to understand the machinations of live music promotion, interviews with a wide range of promoters in a variety of organisational structures are necessary to clarify certain practices of that world unobservable in participation.

The chapter lays the foundation for the remainder of this thesis by providing an initial assessment of the role of the promoter, which broadly consists of planning, publicising and producing the live music event. While this appears simple on the surface, within these responsibilities the promoter's role may be variable, and it is argued that the promotion of live music is, in fact, highly complex, inherently risky and competitive, and necessarily covert. To illustrate this, the chapter is arranged into two broad sections, using the theoretical models established by Brennan and Webster (2011) and Brennan *et al* (forthcoming), and drawing on Peterson and Anand's production of culture perspective (2004). To fully understand what promoters are and how they operate, an analysis of promoters' motivations and career pathways is also necessary, hence the first section outlines what promoters are; the second, why they promote.

The first section is divided into three further subsections examining the working practices of promoters. The first argues that the promoter's role is variable but broadly consists of three main responsibilities. The second posits that all promoters are risk-takers and therefore the promotion of live music is inherently competitive. The third subsection demonstrates that the promoter's role is necessarily covert by exploring the 'behind-the-scenes' identity of the promoter. The second main section of the chapter is divided into two interconnected subsections to explore the motivations and career pathways of live

music promoters. It shows that their motives may be somewhat contradictory and sometimes conflicting, and that their career pathways are many, varied, and often unique.

## **Defining the promoter's role**

To begin, it is first necessary to define a 'live music promoter' against an 'event manager'. An event could be broadly defined as being inclusive of anything from a business conference to a sports tournament. A live music event, on the other hand, as shown in previous chapters, is temporally and spatially, socially and musically unique, and requires an artist, an audience, a venue, appropriate technology, and a catalyst, or promoter (Frith 2008a). A live music promoter is therefore fundamentally distinct from an event manager due to the specificities of live music, although some elements of their role overlap. Added to this, the promoter is usually the person or organisation taking the (financial, social, personal) risk, while an event manager will often be hired by a client for a fixed fee.

To illustrate this further, Becker's 'Wittgenstein Trick' – as presented in the literature review – can be applied to the following statement by Geoff Ellis, chief executive of DF Concerts in Scotland. Ellis explains the differences between the company's usual operational duties compared to a rather more unusual 'gig' – that of staging the papal visit to Glasgow in September 2010 – stating that: 'We're not *promoting* the visit so it is completely different. Normally, we book acts and sell tickets. But here we're *event managers* putting on a large-scale event, which we are used to doing with big concerts' (quoted in Dingwall 2010, author's emphasis). Here Ellis is defining the promoter against an event manager as someone who not only produces the show but also plans, publicises and sells it. However, this example shows how variable a promoter's role may be and how they necessarily adapt to circumstance. Ellis was clearly not pigeon-holing himself as purely a live music promoter, but was, instead, able to see how his company could stage an event as seemingly incongruous as a papal visit.

## ***Planning, publicity and production***

As shown in the literature review, live music promoters come in all shapes and sizes – there is not a 'one size fits all' model. A promoter may be the secretary of a local amateur orchestra who compiles and distributes a season programme; a vast international

promotional company such as Live Nation; or a DJ putting on a free party in the woods. However, it is argued that all promoters fulfil three important functions. The following subsection, then, draws on the typologies of promoters set out in Chapter Two to illustrate this. An ‘independent enthusiast’ promoter for DIY outfit Cry Parrot in Glasgow sums up the three aspects of promotion thus: ‘There’s a lot of responsibilities involved: it’s basically divided into the promotion side, the organisational side and “on the night”’ (Hope 2010), or to reorder and rename: *planning*, *publicity*, and *production*. Sheffield-based ‘independent enthusiast’ ‘world music’ promoter, Alan Deadman, extends this definition:-

I think a promoter is somebody who makes something happen and all that that entails, and let’s people know about it [laughs]. [The] *definition* of the word really implies the marketing and publicity of the event ... but the other bit of it ... is finding the acts, finding the venue, working out a budget and doing all the things that are necessary to end up with a hopefully successful gig (Deadman 2008, emphasis in original).

Stuart Basford, a semi-retired ‘independent commercial’ (now ‘enthusiast’) promoter in Sheffield, further defines what a promoter *thinks* they do: ‘It’s get the act, find the venue, sell tickets’ (2009). And Geoff Ellis again:-

You arrange dates. You do a full costing. You offer the artist a guarantee, plus a percentage of the profits ... You’ve got to cover all the areas. Marketing, budgeting, the financial accounting on the back end of it. Health and safety plays a big role. Crowd management. Production management. There’s a lot involved (quoted in Jamieson 2010).

The role of the promoter in planning any live music event is therefore to mediate between the artist and the venue (via an agent if necessary) in order to match the artist with the most appropriate venue for their status, musical style, and expected audience capacity for maximum gain (for example, financial profit or cultural status) or, at the least, minimum loss. In other words, organising the where, when, and who of the event by envisioning and then facilitating the most appropriate environments for the artists they promote and the audiences to whom they promote. The role of the promoter in publicising any live music event is to sell the event to the audience on behalf of the venue and the artist. Promoters mediate between the artist and the venue at one end and the audience at the other in order to gather together the optimum community of participants for that event.

The role of the promoter in producing the event is twofold: they are responsible to both the artist and the audience and must ensure that frontstage (audience), stage and backstage (artist) areas run smoothly, and that the appropriate technology is provided for at the event. There is also an evaluative element that renders the promoter's role cyclical; the success or failure of a previous event impacts on the planning, publicity and production stages of the next event. At a basic level, promoters of any type therefore need some sort of artistic direction, administrative organisation (planning); marketing operation (publicity); artist liaison, technical liaison, and accounting function (production). These functions could be carried out by one individual, split between individuals, or departmentalised, but these are the fundamental requirements for what promoters do.<sup>37</sup> These aspects of the promoter's role are covered in depth in later chapters.

However, the promoter's level of active involvement in each stage of the planning, publicity and production process can be variable. A promoter may be very 'hands on' or relatively 'hands off' and their role may be mediated by a number of other parties, such as promoters' representatives or 'reps', as is covered further in Chapters Six and Nine. As agent Paul Charles explains: 'The truth is that the promoter is now rarely more than a figurehead. There are teams of people doing everything' (2004, p. 140), although this depends partly on the size and scale of the event in question. In this way, the promoter's role may be relatively hidden, even to the artist, as is discussed later in this chapter. The following further illustrates the variability of promoters within these basic functions.

### ***Variability within live music promotion***

The first point to be made is that promoters can be geographically defined. As Cloonan and Frith (2010) state, promoters are 'local businesses' – gigs happen in local places and their audiences are geographically determined – but promoters are also necessarily part of national and international networks and deals. In this way, while the promoter's 'product' – the live music event – is necessarily localised, live music *promotion* is not inherently so. Live music promoters, then, may be local, regional, national, or

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<sup>37</sup> Promoters may also fulfil an A&R (artist and repertoire) role in seeking out new artists or acts, a term used widely within the recording industries but less explicitly within the live music sector, even if part of the promoter's role is indeed to source new artists to promote.

international (Passman 2004, p. 356). Hence a local promoter usually promotes locally, occasionally venturing out to nearby towns and cities, whereas a regional promoter promotes regionally, and multi-national corporations such as Live Nation may take on entire national or international tours. 'Commercial' promoters SJM, for instance, promote mostly in the north of England, while DF Concerts promote primarily in Scotland, occasionally taking on the Scottish leg of a tour on behalf of SJM. Many national tours are split in this way, in that there are different promoters promoting different 'territories' within the UK (Dodds 2010). Meanwhile, British opera companies tour to specific regions and can only tour outside that region if they 'swap' a city with another opera company (Reedijk 2009).<sup>38</sup>

Within their geographical remits, the research indicates that there are two main 'types' of show that promoters put on, namely that for a single production, a promoter sells either an artist or an event. For the former, the show's focus is on a specific 'product', usually the headline artist; for the latter, the focus is on a more abstract 'product' rather than one particular artist *per se*. To illustrate this, the following Bristol-based promoter explained the difference between club (event) and gig (artist) promoting:-

Club promoting is all about the venue, the DJs, the music you're going to play, the styling of your flyers, the word of mouth, the street flyering, the street postering, the buzz, you know. People wanting to go to an event because they've heard it's a great event. *Band* promoting's about the act and whether people want to see the act, you know, and you're promoting the act ... It's more about people going to see something very specific (anonymised, emphasis in original).

At Headcharge, for example, the focus was on the *event* itself with the guest artist as a secondary selling point, whereas a Take That concert, on the other hand, is sold on the headline *artist*.

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<sup>38</sup> The UK touring opera companies have what is known as a 'spheres of influence' agreement, originally brokered by the four UK arts councils. Within this, the cross-border touring agreement between the UK's lyric companies (theatre, ballet and opera companies) allows reciprocal 'swaps' with another company, but allows the 'owner' of a territory the right of veto over each visit in regard to 'their' theatres within the territory to avoid the home company effectively cross-subsidising the visitor (Reedijk 2009).

There are also clear differences in promoters' involvement with Frith's (2008a) elements of a live music event, depending partly on the promotional model used as set out in Brennan and Webster's article (2011). For an 'artist-affiliated' promoter, for example, the promoter's role necessarily includes an element of planning the artist's schedule that an 'independent' promoter – often working on one tour date only – does not have to do. Hence for Sheffield-based 'artist-affiliated state' promoter Music in the Round, the administration staff plan their resident ensemble's season and organise the dates – effectively acting as agents – but also see themselves as promoters (Johnson 2009). Both 'artist-affiliated' and 'independent' promoters are often able to be flexible in their choice of venue, whereas a promoter using the 'venue' model deals with a fixed physical structure – the Royal Albert Hall or Mr Wolfs in Bristol, for example – and a promoter using this model must therefore be thinking the other way round. Rather than 'Which venue would suit the artist?', the decision becomes 'Which artist would suit the venue?'<sup>39</sup> However, as pointed out in Chapter Two, the promoter is not tied to a single promotional model and in reality may use different models for different events; as is seen later in the thesis, even a promoter using the 'venue' model is able to be flexible.

Promoters may see their role and duties in slightly whimsical terms as well, which helpfully illustrates the multifarious duties a promoter may have to undertake. Indeed, one promoter remarked off-hand that his job involved:-

Just walking around, talking to people. That's kind of my job. Well, it is *really*; it's all about communication, our job, really. It's either kind of talking to either a manager or an agent or a label or something on the phone by day and the same at night, preferably with people that you can get on with, and have a beer with at the bar (Dodds 2010, emphasis in original).

Fundamentally, though, the promoter's responsibilities are to the artist and the audience, as illustrated by the following statements:-

It's just like planning a holiday, really – a one-day holiday for [the artist], and you're *planning* it (Hobson 2008, emphasis in original).

I just basically became like a professional shopper [for the artist]. I was in a supermarket every day, buying riders, and running the gigs, and driving from town to town (Dodds 2010).

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<sup>39</sup> A venue is defined as the place in which the live music event takes place (Frith 2008a).

I started off trying to do live gigs by trying to replicate situations where you have people round to your house for dinner (Morton 2008).

I suppose it's a bit like the – without sounding too pompous about it – it's a bit like the Reithian principles of the BBC; you know, education, enlightenment, and entertainment, that's it. You want to entertain people, you want them to say, 'Oh wow, I've never seen that band before, they were great, check them out' (Razor 2008).

This whimsy, however, masks the reality of the promoter's responsibility: they are the individual, organisation or company that facilitates the necessary practical and economic transactions necessary for a live music event to take place, taking on financial, social, and personal risks in order to do so (Brennan and Webster 2011). The next subsection examines in more depth the economic risks taken by the promoter, and the differing attitudes to risk by 'state', 'commercial', and 'enthusiast' promoters (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming).

### ***Economic risks***

Live music in the UK is often regarded as a 'leisure activity', outside of 'everyday' life. For this reason, it is argued that the promotion of live music is inherently competitive as even not-for-profit – or 'not-for-loss' – events compete for the so-called 'leisure pound'. Competitors range from other live music promoters and their events; other leisure activities such as holidays, restaurants, and cinemas; work and family commitments; and activities in the home.

Promoters, then, are *investors* in (and exploiters of) live music, whether it be an economic or temporal investment or otherwise; they 'underwrite the show' (Mackie 2008). What differentiates promoters from other figures such as event managers and agents, then, is the nature and level of risk involved; as John Giddings explained, 'A promoter takes the risk; an agent gets paid whether a promoter wins or loses' (Giddings 2010). As suggested by a number of commentators (Diggle 1994; National Music Council 2002; Charles 2004; Frith 2007; Reynolds 2008; etc.) live music promotion is a very risky business.<sup>40</sup>

Promotional companies Metropolis, Regular Music and Kilimanjaro informed the

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<sup>40</sup> However, see Chapter Five for discussion of the financial risk being partly distributed and borne by the public sector.

Competition Commission that their business involved high risks and achieved low margins; Kilimanjaro stated that it was rare for a promoter to achieve an operating margin of more than five per cent (Competition Commission 2010b, p. F9). The goal for promoters, then, is to attract enough people to their event to either break even or make a (financial, personal, social) profit, rather than a loss.

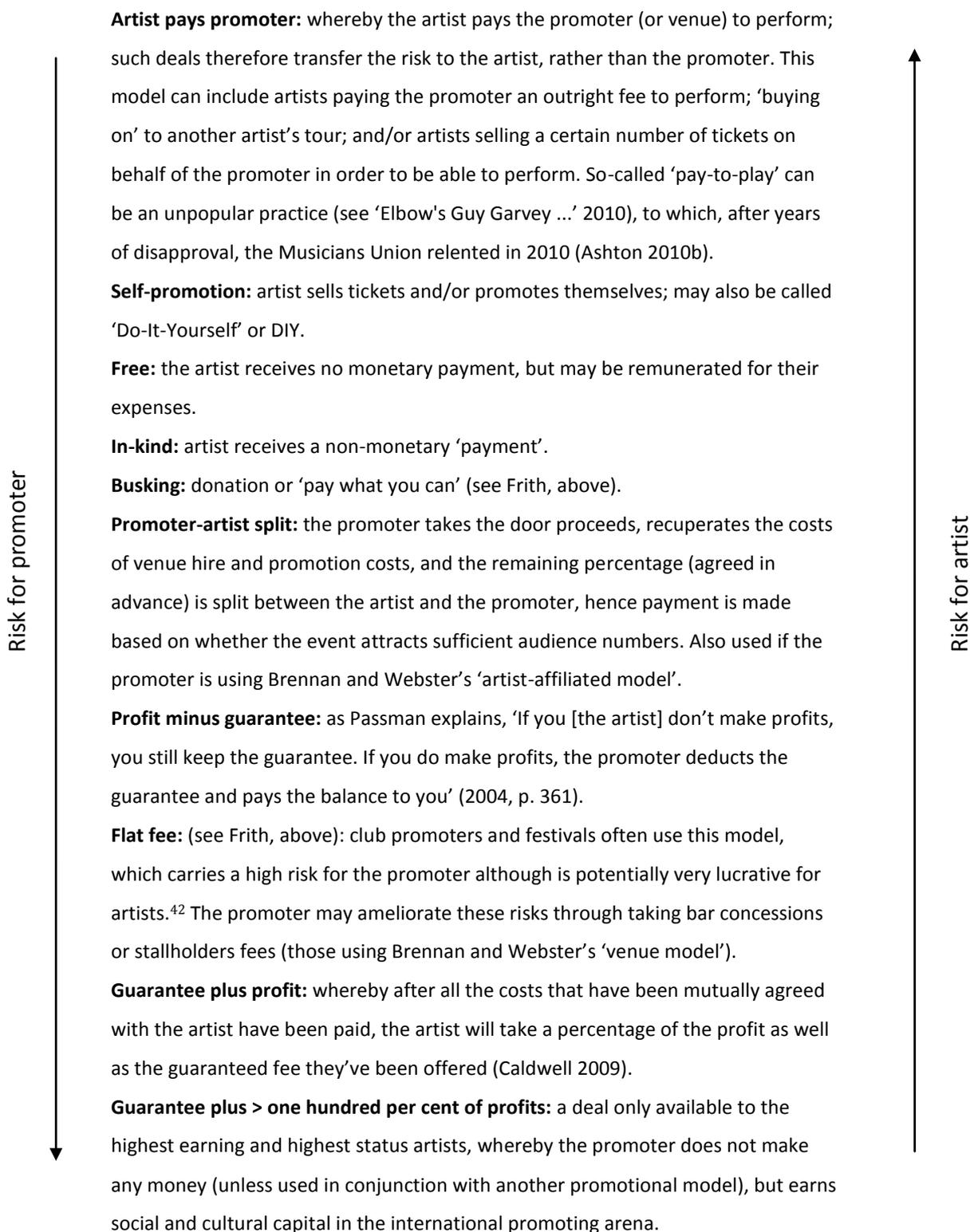
Promoters' risks are further increased by the nature of their 'product'. As discussed in the literature review, promoters of live music events are both helped and hindered by their product's uniqueness and scarcity. Live music events are temporally and spatially specific, unlike, say, an album or a tin of baked beans, therefore if the event does not sell for the specified date and time – unless it is a regular event – the promoter's risk will not have paid off. Not only does the promoter deal with temporal and spatial specificities uncommon to many businesses, they also deal with different types of risk. It should theoretically be easier to sell tickets to a U2 concert, for instance, than for a gig by an obscure 'world music' artist, and the differing risks are usually reflected in the artist's fee. Hence the more the potential audience for an artist or event, the higher the fee, which may then impact on the ticket price for the consumer.

To further understand how the promoter's risks are manifested and mitigated, a model of risk is offered, measuring the promoter's risk versus the artist's risk. In work examining the political economy of live music, Frith suggests two basic models of economic risk from the *artist's* point of view:-

a) Musician performs and as a result of the performance listener gives performer money. This simple model is exemplified by *busking*. Note that the amount busker will receive from listener is non-standardised and unpredictable.

b) Musician is contracted by listener to play for them. Again this simple model is still an aspect of everyday practice ... Fee is usually fixed in advance but can also be supplemented (or even entirely be made up of) tips, again non-standardised and unpredictable (Frith 2008c, emphasis in original).

A more nuanced model to include the promoter would be as shown in Figure 4-1, with the economic risk for the artist decreasing from top to bottom. The economic risk for the promoter, on the other hand, *increases* from top to bottom as the artist's economic risk decreases:-

**Figure 4-1: Model of economic risk for promoter and artist<sup>41</sup>**

<sup>41</sup> It should be pointed out that if the artist is paying for production costs and in hock to a record label, the model becomes skewed, as it does if merchandise and sponsorship is taken into account.

<sup>42</sup> AC/DC, for example, were rumoured to have been paid three million pounds to appear at 2010's Download Festival (Jones 2010).

Promoters' risks may not simply be financial, however, as promoters must also deal with personal and social risks including threats to their reputation and/or their own or others' personal safety. A folk session 'host', for example, runs the risk of not being invited back if the sessions they run are repeatedly poorly attended or managed, which may then impact on their reputation among the folk community, while a promoter putting on a free party in a warehouse may even run the risk of being arrested, which may then subsequently *raise* their status among particular subcultural communities. In this way, then, risk may 'constitute opportunities for benefit (upside) or threats to success (downside)' (Institute of Risk Management 2002, p. 2). A promoter using the 'pay-to-play' model (see Figure 4-1), may well be taking a low financial risk but potentially risking a high price in terms of reputation and trust.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, while a promoter using the 'guarantee plus > one hundred per cent of profits' model is taking a massive financial risk, they hope to profit in other ways. Australian promoter Kevin Jacobson, for example, allegedly offered Bruce Springsteen one hundred and one per cent of the gross income for his 1985 *Born in the USA* tour, the argument being that it was such a high-profile tour that it was worth doing for next to no money simply for the international prestige garnered (Coupe 2003, p. 65).

There are also differences within different genre cultures regarding risk; for example, classical orchestral musicians often expect to get paid to rehearse whereas pop musicians generally do not. This also varies from company to company, however, and one event may contain a variety of musicians on different contracts. Scottish Opera, for example, expects its guest soloists to rehearse for no fee and receive payment only for a performance, whereas the orchestra members receive a guaranteed salary (Reedijk 2009).<sup>44</sup> Similarly, crew and touring 'session' musicians will often receive a guaranteed fee whereas the artist's income is likely to be based on ticket sales, dependent on the payment deal.

Promoters therefore deal in different types and levels of risk depending on the type of show and the contract with the artist (if used). To recoup their initial investment, a major

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<sup>43</sup> See for example, 'Live and Unsigned Scam?' (2010).

<sup>44</sup> As of April 2011, however, Scottish Opera's resident orchestra moved to part-time hours (Miller 2010).

part of the promoter's role is therefore to administrate the transaction between artist and audience (if necessary) and there are three broad ticketing (revenue) models the promoter can use in order to recoup their initial investment: 'free' (no door charge but promoter may benefit financially from the sale of other products); 'donation' (variable income based on what the customer chooses to pay); and 'fixed'.<sup>45</sup> A free event potentially carries the most economic risks and must be subsidised in other ways, while a fixed ticket price should garner at least some ticket revenue. Within the 'fixed' model, economic risks may be further mitigated in a variety of ways, one of which is to charge a variable price for seats based on seat position, or 'added extras' such as 'premier seats' or meet and greet events. Further means of risk mitigation are now explored.

### **Risk mitigation**

Promoters often 'wear many hats' and may mitigate their economic risk through other avenues. The majority of 'independent' promoters own no assets related to the artist, unlike record labels or publishers. Instead, contracts between the two are based on the artist providing a service for the length of time contracted, therefore economic risk is based purely on the success of that event. 'Independent' promoters' 'assets' are in the form of customer databases, as is seen in Chapter Eight, therefore their assets relate to the *audience* rather than the artist. 'Artist-affiliated' promoters, on the other hand, are able to profit from artists, usually through taking a percentage of the fee or merchandise. To illustrate the promoter 'wearing many hats', John Giddings, for instance, acts as both an agent (artist's representative) and a promoter, and is therefore able to mitigate economic risks from both sides of the fence, as it were. Giddings is an agent for the likes of Genesis, Celine Dion, Iggy and the Stooges, The Charlatans, Westlife and Boyzone; acts as Live Nation's Global Touring Consultant for Arthur Fogel<sup>46</sup> (U2, Rolling Stones, Madonna, Sting, The Police, and 'anything else that comes up'); and promotes the Isle of Wight Festival (Giddings 2010). Giddings therefore has 'three jobs, three hats I wear, and they all overlap' (ibid.).

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<sup>45</sup> Dynamic pricing – or the 'airline model' – is a 'new' ticketing model that, while not practised at the time of writing, may soon be in use and may well become the favoured model (Ellis 2011). Using this model, the price of the ticket increases or decreases in relation to the demand for the show.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur Fogel is the Chief Executive Officer of Global Touring at Live Nation, based in Los Angeles.

Another means of risk mitigation is for promoters to book artists who are 'guaranteed' to sell out, the 'more reliable stuff' (Pearce 2008). Yet another is to coordinate artists' tours to coincide with record release dates, 'so they both sell each other' (Mackie 2008). A further means is for the promoter to take 'kickbacks' from the secondary market, an issue dealt with further in Chapter Eight. Finally, promoters may also vertically and horizontally integrate by purchasing assets such as venues; charging for the sale of merchandise; or providing bar and catering services for which they take the profits (for further discussion on this point, see Brennan and Webster 2011). It is possible to further typologise Brennan and Webster's 'venue model' of promotion by examining a venue's operating model for any one particular event and corresponding economic risk. Drawing on the case study research, venues may be categorised thus: 'space-for-hire', 'promoter-venue-split', and 'venue-as-promoter'. In this sense, the venue takes on the entire risk of the event itself ('venue-as-promoter'); ameliorates that risk through collaboration with an external promoter and/or artist ('promoter-venue-split'); or passes the majority of the risk to the external promoter and/or artist ('space-for-hire'). In this way, venue-owning/managing promoters such as Live Nation have moved from being 'risk-takers to rent-takers' (Williamson 2011).

The venue is never entirely risk-free, however. Even in the latter model, the venue risks economic capital simply by opening its doors because it still has to spend on its staff and 'hidden' costs such as amenities (electricity, etc.), insurance and compliance with regulations such as alcohol licensing. Venues ameliorate these risks to an extent, however, because they are able to generate income through other streams, as shown above. As with concert promoters, venues may favour one type of promotional model over another but they are certainly not restricted to it, and in practice will adjust their model from one event to another depending on the particularities of any given event. Within a venue's seasonal programme, there may be a mixture of operating models, and some venues prefer one type above another, dependent on the level of risk involved.

### **'Gambling'**

As stated above, all promoters are risk-takers, whichever promotional model they favour. Promoters are particularly interesting, however, as they rely on what Williamson, Cloonan and Frith (in press) define as 'experiential knowledge' and 'organised knowledge', the

former being the 'unsystematised accumulation of anecdote and example, on instinct and gut feelings, on the value of "good ears" and intuition, of luck and personality'; the latter being empirical or evidence-based knowledge. Promoters rely on both types of knowledge in order to plan, publicise and produce their events, but tensions and contradictions between 'what you know' and 'what you believe' are apparent at every level of their practice. In this way, promoters may talk about promotion in terms of 'gambling', a curious combination of experiential and empirical knowledge (and luck) but one particularly relevant to the promotion of live music; indeed, the music industries in general (see Negus 1999). Hence the following two promoters stated that:-

I think you have got to have a gambling mentality, because ... you are a gambler – I always say this – we are gamblers, really, because there's money involved. It's not a bit of fun ... it *is* a bit of fun but it's not ... pleasure, really (Basford 2009, emphasis in original).

I told someone the other day they were stupid for betting on horses. And they said, 'But you bet on people with two legs every day' which is so true (Giddings 2010).

Or as Melvin Benn, managing director of Festival Republic, organiser of Reading and Leeds Festivals, explained:-

It's not like a regular business ... It's gambling in its crudest form. Before the tickets go on sale, you promise to deliver a festival that contains a certain amount of things for the customer. Then you have to deliver, whether or not the customer decides to buy a ticket (quoted in Warman 2010).

'State', 'commercial', and 'enthusiast' promoters (as defined in Chapter Two) have different attitudes to risk or 'gambling', based both on where the initial subsidy for their event comes from and on the nature of the risk involved. 'Independent commercial' promoters rely on the money garnered by their events, hence they often have a variable 'commission-based' salary. Promoter Conal Dodds, for example, is employed by 'independent commercial' promotional company Metropolis Music and explained that, 'if you make a lot of money, you earn a lot of money. If you don't make the company any money, you just get your salary' (Dodds 2010). 'Enthusiasts' are often promoting for pleasure and have external sources of funding; a full-time job, for instance, or supportive partners. In this sense, an 'enthusiast' promoter is almost acting as a volunteer, reliant on external funding or support; they may reap financial rewards if available, but equally they

may put their profits directly back into their next event. Their rewards may therefore be in-kind or not directly financial. As discussed in Chapter Two, however, promoters are not restricted to one model, and such models may overlap depending on the event in question.

'State' promoters, however, see what they do in very different terms to both 'enthusiasts' and 'commercial' promoters, as their attitude to risk is that they are spending someone else's – the taxpayers' – money. Those working for a 'state' promoter will often be on a fixed salary, independent of profit or loss; the organisation will often have charitable status in order to enable fundraising; and the promoter may rely on volunteers for certain aspects of its operations. A 'state' promoter has an obligation to their audience in a way that an 'enthusiast' or 'commercial' promoter does not; in this sense, 'state' promoters often have constraints on their risk-taking. When Alex Reedijk, General Director of Scottish Opera, was asked whether he identified with the concept of 'gambling', he replied:-

No. Because I think gambling implies reckless[ness]. And ['commercial' promoters are] perfectly entitled to do that because it's their money. They can do what they want; they can be as ... Whereas I'm effectively responsible for over eight million pounds of the taxpayer's money, so that's always at the forefront of my mind (Reedijk 2009, emphasis in original).

Promoters do not only 'gamble' economically, however. As Cloonan (2010) notes, 'one way of minimising the gamble is to continually think creatively about the type of event being promoted' by taking artistic or creative risks. When questioned further about the concept of 'gambling', Reedijk admitted that, due to the sometimes unpredictable nature of arts funding, he necessarily makes decisions about repertoire anything up to four years in advance without knowing what level of funding is available or (sometimes) without obtaining Board approval (Reedijk 2009). However, such decisions are balanced against artistic considerations and audience expectations, thus highlighting both the complexities in the decision-making process for promoters and the necessarily personal attitudes to risk-taking.

The promotional model used by the promoter therefore affects their attitude to both economic and 'creative' risks. As noted in the literature review (Cloonan 2010), an 'enthusiast' promoter is perhaps more able to be creative than a 'commercial' or 'state'

promoter, and may remain subcultural or 'niche', whereby other forms of capital (social, (sub)cultural, etc.) are perhaps more important than economic capital. A 'commercial' promoter, on the other hand, is perhaps less able to be creative in their choice of who to promote and more susceptible to market forces and other people's tastes (ibid.). In this way, there is often a tension between artistic and commercial sensibilities, and, as is seen in Chapter Six, this can impact on the accumulation of promoters' social capital.

The above has shown that the promoter's role is highly complex and inherently risky: not only does the promoter deal with temporal and spatial specificities uncommon to many businesses, they also deal with different types of risk. However, it could also be argued that some promoters are, in fact, taking very *few* risks; a promoter putting on U2, say, while paying a large fee for the artist to appear, is taking a very low risk as tickets are almost guaranteed to sell out. In this way, akin to record companies, promoters could be seen to 'reproduce works which have already become successful. They take no risks and reap the full advantage' (Frith 1987, p. 61). If this is the case, then, it is worth considering why being perceived as a risk-taker may be beneficial to the promoter, and hence the political implications implicit in promoters' discourses (and those in secondary sources).

Cloonan (2011b) argues that such discourses illustrate how promoters now perceive themselves as 'the new ruling class in the music industries'. If the notion that, rather than record companies, *promoters* are the 'new' risk-takers now appears to be accepted as 'common-sense', Cloonan suggests that promoters have therefore 'won the ideological battle' and hence 'the ruling ideas of this epoch are those espoused by promoters' (ibid.). This is of obvious political expedience to promoters and the live music industries, then, whose increased political capital can also be seen, perhaps, in their inclusion into the lobbying group UK Music in May 2011, alongside the BPI, the Musicians' Union, and the Music Publishers Association. This political clout can also be seen at local levels, where (some) promoters have close working relationships with local councils and therefore are kept abreast of new regulations (Coet 2009), but also 'have the ear' of those in power. As Dave McGeachan from DF Concerts explained, 'people see us bringing something new to the city, be it Glasgow or wherever, so they work with you well and try to accommodate everything as well' (2010). Thus while this thesis considers all promoters to be risk-takers, it also recognises that the perception of promoter-as-risk-taker may also be both economically and politically expedient. Such backroom power struggles are usually

opaque to the artist and audience, however, as the promoter is (usually) behind-the-scenes at the live music event itself, as is now examined.

### ***Promoters behind-the-scenes***

To return to Frith's necessary components of a live music event (2008a), while artists, audiences, venues, and even technology form the basis for the event and are usually visible, the promoter is typically the hermetic part of the live music equation. By dissecting Brennan and Webster's (2011) typology of promoters, it can be shown that the investing and overseeing role of the promoter is *necessarily* covert within the live music event itself. 'Independent' promoters are not linked to any one of Frith's 'visible' components, other than as a catalyst. 'Artist-affiliated' and 'venue' promoters, on the other hand, fulfil a dual role: they are both at one and the same time promoters *and* artist/venue. This dual role means that during the event itself, the role of promoter takes second place to their primary function – artist/venue – and the role of *promoter* as 'overseer' at the event is therefore hidden; the audience are there to see the artist/venue, not the promoter, after all.<sup>47</sup> At a more presentational event, then, unless the 'promoter' themselves is performing (or 'artist-affiliated'), they are perhaps more likely to remain covertly backstage, or in Fonarow's 'zone three' (Fonarow 2006; see Chapter Seven for further discussion). At a participatory event, however, the division into those who produce and those who consume will be less marked or even not exist at all, hence the division between frontstage and backstage is less apparent or non-existent, thus the promoter will be perhaps more overt.

While the *role* of the promoter within the event itself is covert, promoters vary as to whether they remain fully covert or more overt *at* the event. This appears to depend partly on how established they are as a promoter, the size and scale of the event, what the aims of the event are, and how confident they feel about taking responsibility for the success (or failure) of the event. As Goffman states, 'If an audience appreciates that the performance has a director, they are likely to hold him more responsible than other performers for the success of the performance' (1990, p. 103). Hence many promoters become 'shadowy figures' while others are *bon viveurs* and more visible. Alex Reedijk of

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<sup>47</sup> However, see Chapter Eight for discussion of simultaneous production/publicity.

Scottish Opera, for instance, meets and greets audiences as they enter the venue (Reedijk 2009), in this way acting as a 'greeter' rather than as the promoter *per se*. To offer another example, Alan Deadman (2008) makes a point of being visible within the event by 'being very much there and having a good time' as a DJ, a compère, and an enthusiastic dancer.

Before the event, however, promoters may personally identify themselves with the event in the publicity material or via the media, as with Vince Power's Hop Farm Festival and the Eavis family's identification with Glastonbury Festival.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the promoter's identity is perhaps more *overt* when selling an event than an artist, hence the name of a club night will often be the name of a promoter; Headcharge was both the promoter *and* the event, for example. However, as stated above, within the event itself, the role of the promoter usually takes a backseat to the other elements.

Alternatively, the promoter may employ a 'rep' to attend the actual event and not even attend themselves, meaning that their role is 'hands off' and fully covert to both artist and audience; furthermore, the 'rep' will often only deal with the audience if there is a problem (Francis 2009). In this way, promoters may operate a purely covert 'business-to-business' (B2B) model in which there is little or no direct contact with the audience (consumer). For example, when 'independent' promoters DF Concerts hire the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, they pay the venue to contact customers on their behalf, and any communication to previous GRCH attendees will be dealt with by venue staff – as will ticket transactions via the venue – not by DF directly (Donald 2010). Hence a promoter may never deal directly with the consumer and therefore the consumer may not be aware of their identity. Many promoters, however, operate both a B2B *and* a 'business-to-consumer' (B2C) model, mediating between artist and venue, but also contacting consumers directly via email or direct mail, as is the case with 'artist-affiliated' Opera North, for example.

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<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that Melvin Benn, promoter of Festival Republic's Reading and Leeds festivals, identifies readily in the media with those festivals but not Glastonbury, for which his company owns forty per cent of the management company (Hall 2009). Benn's seemingly deliberate distancing from Glastonbury's cosy 'kitchen table' image allows Glastonbury to appear far removed from the Live Nation-Gaiety owned corporate world of Festival Republic. As has been noted elsewhere, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut is also covert about its links to LN-Gaiety (Frith *et al* 2010, pp. 26-7).

## Branding

If a promoter is selling an event rather than a specific artist, that event may become a trusted 'brand'. Certain types of events such as festivals offer their audiences live performance as 'a kind of abstract ideal' (Frith 2007, p. 9) rather than being based on specific artists, and in the case of festivals such as Glastonbury and T in the Park, for example, tickets sell out long before all the artists are announced ('T In The Park ...' 2010; 'Glastonbury sells out ...' 2010). As CEO of HMV-owned Mama Group, Dean James, explained: 'There are two ways to do festivals ... Either you increase your buying power or you need it so that no one cares who is on the bill' (quoted in Cardew 2011). In this way, some promoters and their products become a brand in a similar way to record labels such as Ninja Tune or Rough Trade, where the consumer buys into the label as much as the artist. The concept of promoter as trusted brand is not limited to rock/pop music or festivals, however. Companies such as Opera North rely on one third of its audiences – subscribers – to buy tickets for an entire season, without necessarily being acquainted with the operas in question or the performers involved. The subscribers instead trust that Opera North's commitment to quality and innovation will be maintained and that they will therefore enjoy the season regardless of the specific operas or performers, in a sense. If the artist is also the promoter or curator, they therefore sell the event based on both artist *and* event; All Tomorrow's Parties, for instance, invite guest curators – including The Breeders (2009) and Belle and Sebastian (2010) – who brand the event differently each year. Venues can also function as trusted brands whereby the place itself has its own mythology and reputation; King Tut's, for example, sometimes attracts customers who attend the venue without knowing the artist in advance, instead relying on King Tut's' promoters to put on quality acts.

The naming of a promotional company or event is also of interest, as is its logo, as it may signify a type of organisation or event. As Cohen notes, bands' names symbolise the band to its members and to the outside world, 'not just representing them but also defining them' (1991, p. 37), and so too the name and logo chosen by a promoter. John Giddings admitted that his agency, TBA international, was so named because 'We didn't know what to call it so we called it TBA "To Be Advised", and I put "International" on the end because it sounded like Dunhill International. It sounded flash, like we knew what we were doing' (Giddings 2010). In this way, the naming of a company for B2B promoters

may be to borrow prestige from pre-existing companies in another field, as with Giddings, or for B2C promoters it is a shorthand means of expressing the musical discourse within which it resides and/or the type of event. For example, Headcharge and Planet Zogg in Sheffield were both subcultural (and hedonistic) trance/techno events with a psychedelic edge, indicated both by the names, logos, and images used on the publicity material, as is discussed in Chapter Eight.

The first section of this chapter has offered an understanding of *what* promoters do, in terms of their duties, attitudes to risk, working practices, and identities. However, it is argued that to fully understand what promoters are and how they operate, an analysis of promoters' motivations and career pathways is also necessary. Hence the next section takes one step back to examine *how* and *why* they do it by examining occupational careers and motivations.

## **Promoters' whys and wherefores**

### ***Occupational careers***

The term 'promoter' deliberately groups a variety of people together with differing ideologies and motivations who, for multifarious reasons, promote music. The pathways to becoming a promoter, however, are many, varied, and often unique. To understand how and why one becomes a promoter and whether it is a conscious decision or one that is realised over time, it is useful to employ Gareth Dylan Smith's (2011) model of 'identity realisation', based on his work on drummers. Smith posits that there are two types of identity realisation: 'passive identity realisation' (PIR) whereby the sense of identity 'comes upon you' as recognition rather than something actively pursued, and 'active identity realisation' (AIR), the realisation of identity through active 'self-construction of the self' (ibid., pp. 84-6). Hence while one individual may actively seek to become a promoter, another may fall into it 'by accident'. For example, for Edinburgh-based 'independent commercial' promoter, Regular Music's Mark Mackie:-

**AIR:** I just knew that I loved live music ... I've never played music, and never wanted to play music, but I knew I wanted to work with it. So that was the part of it I got in on (Mackie 2008).

Whereas for Edinburgh-based 'independent enthusiast' hip hop/dubstep promoter, Rosie Maclean:-

**PIR:** I never really set out to be a promoter ... I suggested [to an English dubstep promoter], you know, just threw an idea in the air: 'Why don't *you* come up to Edinburgh and do a dubstep night?' and I kind of assumed – because I knew nothing about promoting at the time ... I'd never thought, like, didn't think this was something I could do myself – and I assumed he'd come up to Edinburgh and maybe get me to distribute the flyers or something, but, like, didn't really figure that the responsibility would lie on *me* to promote the whole night, but I just ended up doing it (Maclean 2008, emphasis in original).

Smith (2011, pp. 86-7) develops his identity model as being 'constructed (realised) not by identity alone, but by learning as well', both passively and actively. 'Active learning realisation' (ALR) involves a conscious decision to learn something, whereas 'passive learning realisation' (PLR) occurs whenever something is learned unconsciously. Again, this is a useful concept to apply to promoters, who either 'pick things up as they go along' or actively seek to develop skills.

Alternatively, Peterson and Anand identify two general ways that careers are shaped: predictable careers from the 'top down' within normatively controlled fields, such as the funded arts sector (orchestras, opera, etc.); and 'bottom up' careers enacted by 'career-building market-sensing entrepreneurs' – 'commercial' promoters perhaps – which start from the margins of existing professions and conventions (2004, p. 317). Within the former category could be included education – active learning realisation – and the recent introduction of higher education courses may offer an alternative career path into live music promotion; a BA (Hons) in promotion at Southampton Solent University, for example, arts administration at Goldsmiths, and the British Institute of Innkeeping Award Board (BIAB) Level 2 Award for Music Promoters ('Organisations unite ...' 2010).

However, often it is the case that a promoter may be in the right place at the right time, or, through an accumulation of contacts and knowledge may be offered a job at an existing promotional company or venue through previous involvement in live music. For instance, one promoter I interviewed who had already promoted a number of gigs independently, happened to be in a venue when the previous booker quit and was offered the 'diary' to take over, later managing and promoting at the venue himself (Wilson 2008). Another became involved through helping to organise a charitable event by effectively 'stalking' Led Zeppelin front man Robert Plant, after which he realised he had a natural aptitude for promoting. He then began running small events in the south-

west of England before being taken on by a larger company, in a sense moving from 'bottom up' to 'top down' (Dodds 2010). The pathways to becoming a promoter are therefore many, varied, non-linear, and often unique. Now that *how* promoters' career pathways have been examined, the chapter turns to *why* they start.

### ***Motivations***

As with the difficulties in defining a 'promoter', it is equally difficult to pinpoint a single defining motivation for promoting, particularly as the promoter's constructed narrative may simply be how they want other people to perceive them; few would admit to being purely financially motivated, for example (see Becker 1998, p. 91). Perhaps unfairly, however, promoters are perceived by some as 'crooks and chancers' (quoted in Cloonan and Frith 2010, n.p.), or 'aggressive wheeler dealers' (Negus 1992, p. 130) only interested in the accumulation of financial profit. This thesis offers a more balanced understanding of live music promoters to show that they may, in fact, be motivated by a variety of factors that are not purely financial. As Coupe states in his work on Australian promoters:-

The reasons [for promoting] are varied – but basically come down to two things: the desire to make money, and the excitement and satisfaction of doing something different, presenting an artist the would-be promoter has a passion for (2003, p. vii).

Motivations, then, may include a desire for economic success, social novelty, *and* musical zeal, but a promoter's motivations may change depending on the nature of the event in question. While financial reward may be the goal one night, for example, the same promoter may promote their favourite artist the following night, simply because they are a fan. It should be noted that the interviewees cited in this subsection were a mixed group, ranging in experience from someone who had only promoted two small-scale hip hop gigs, to a music veteran who has been promoting gigs for twenty-five years. The research therefore reflects a general move from idealism to pragmatism as promoters move from 'enthusiast' to 'commercial' promotion.

To illustrate Coupe's first reason for promoting – economic success – the following examples are offered. Harvey Goldsmith – one of the most well-known British rock/pop promoters – started out as a pharmacy student at college in Brighton and, after being

voted on to the Student Union committee there, started up a music club. In a matter of weeks he found himself on the finance committee, and because 'so much money was coming in that I knew music and entertainment were my life', so began a life-long career in live music promotion ('Harvey Goldsmith interview' 2007). When asked whether he started promoting for economic or artistic ends, Glasgow-based 'independent commercial' promoter for PM Music, Pete MacCalman, stated candidly that it was:-

The marriage of all things, really. Part of it was financial. I do like putting on gigs; I like it when you sell tickets, people come down and have a good night, bands have a good night, everyone makes a bit of money. So a bit of both ... because we live in a fiscal world which is where we all have to make money. So both (MacCalman 2009).

Conversely, many promoters start out because of a love of music, but may move into promoting commercially because of financial pressures, or because the desire to work as a promoter full-time means that financial imperatives become more significant. The ideals of youth may therefore become the economic realities of a long-term career in promotion. Australian promoter, Michael Coppel, illustrates this dynamic well:-

I started off just touring people that I personally really wanted to see [but] I realised after a while that it would have been cheaper for me to get a first-class air ticket to the United States, hire a limousine and follow them around to half a dozen shows. All you really end up doing is buying a really expensive poster to stick on your office wall (quoted in Coupe 2003, p. 107).

Glasgow-based club promoter and freelance production manager for DF Concerts, Crae Caldwell, confirms this view:-

The minute you become a professional promoter, by virtue of that fact, you promote to make money and there's no way that you can just promote things that you like because ... it's a narrow field that you would be working in (Caldwell 2009).

However, as Finnegan posits in her work on 'hidden musicians', motivation for involvement in music may be social and (sub)cultural rather than – or as well as – economic, as music may provide 'a channel to a socially recognised position' (2007, p. 328). Similarly, Cluley (2009, p. 379) shows that alternative rock promoters promote to gain status in a music community and that financial considerations emerge later. Thus for

Glasgow-based DIY promoter, Fielding Hope, promoting music is a means of being involved in a music scene in which he is not an active performer himself:-

I had a lot of problems getting a band together myself so it was a kind of feeling that I was ... Not left *out* as such; I just never made the effort to make something myself and I still feel that frustration, to this day (Hope 2010, emphasis in original).

As a promoter, Hope could 'give back' to something he has 'a lot of passion for', without being a musician himself (*ibid.*). Thus the desire to promote may be to involve oneself in an activity that one places a great deal of intrinsic personal value on oneself, and to reap personal and social gains by doing so.

Returning to Coupe's second point, promoters are often motivated by the excitement and satisfaction of doing something different, particularly if what they want is unavailable in their locality. In this way, promoters may be 'cultural innovators', as is explored further in Chapter Seven. Hence for the following promoters:-

The ultimate motivation for us doing this has been because there was nothing we wanted to go out to in Sheffield ... Part of the beauty of a shit cultural environment [is that] it makes people get off their arses and go, 'I'm fucking bored and I'm gonna do something about it' (Jules from C90 event, cited in Ottewill 2005).

[The DJ-ing] started because I was going out and not hearing the music I wanted to *hear*, and I thought, well, the way to do that is to go out and *play* the music I wanted to hear, because there's probably some other *people* who want to hear this. And oddly enough, I was right! (Hobson 2008, emphasis in original).

Thus artists may become promoters out of a need to play their music to an audience but also sometimes without the necessary intermediaries available to them. As Chris Trout of Sheffield-based DIY band, Smokers Die Younger, explained:-

I'm a musician, but as a result of *that*, if you're a musician within the independent sector, sooner or later you end up *having* to put on gigs, because nobody else is going to do it ... So I *have* put on gigs quite a lot over the last twenty, twenty-five years (Trout 2008, emphasis in original).

His band mate and fellow promoter, James Goldthorpe, added, 'We thought, "We can do this ourselves, so let's *do it!*"' (Goldthorpe 2008, emphasis in original). Promoters may also be musicians themselves who did not want a career as a professional musician but wanted to remain involved in some capacity (Johnson 2009).

Motivation to promote live music may be more abstract, however, and include a search for meaning, a desire to remain outside of the 'norm'. As Fonarow states in her work on indie gigs, unlike other audience members, music industry professionals do not allow music to become 'an amusement, a footnote in one's life ... As long as they perform as ritual practitioners, they remain outsiders, defying the values of Western society' (2006, p. 241). Here, active participation in the live music ritual is a means of remaining outside of what Fonarow sees as a 'social order that posits ... money as the final arbiter of value' (ibid.). While this may apply to indie music – Fonarow's field of research – this view is perhaps somewhat ingenuous, although many promoters do appear to find what they do immensely personally satisfying and meaningful, albeit difficult to quantify.

Another motivation for continuing to promote is the 'privileged' position that backstage allows and the element of power over the other 'ordinary' participants, which can be somewhat addictive. Hence as Fonarow suggests:-

Once exposed to the comforts of backstage life, most professionals find it too seductive to return to less privileged forms of participation ... It is as if when one becomes a participant in the world of the professionals, the behind-the-scenes workings of the music world, it becomes more and more unfeasible to locate oneself as a fan again (ibid., p. 152).

My own experience shows this to be true, both as a researcher and as someone involved in promotion: it is difficult to return to being an 'ordinary' fan once the curtain is pulled aside and the wizard revealed.

Finally, less tangible but extremely powerful motivations for promoting are pleasure and enjoyment – the 'buzz'. The feeling of achievement, particularly if the show sells out, combined with the adrenaline rush ('fight or flight') can be a heady mixture. Indeed, then-promoter Isla Angus (2009) explained that 'The reason I stayed was for the 'buzz' – if you're involved with acts that you love, the recompense for losing money is the fact that you love what you do'. Promoter Stuart Basford further illustrates the 'buzz' one receives

from being involved in a successful event; a sense of external validation by proxy via the applause of the audience:-

A lot of people who are doing it at *my* level are doing it because they like the music and can pick and choose, and it's not the be all and end all. Provided at the end of the year, they haven't lost a ton of money, they're alright. They've met some nice people, put some good music on, and people thank you on the way out. And you do get a bit of a buzz out of that, you know: people come up to you and say, 'That was great, thank you very much' (Basford 2009, emphasis in original)

Certainly, my own involvement with live music promotion concurs with Basford's view, in that there is a sense of gratification about being involved – albeit covertly – with an event which you know intrinsically that without you would either not have happened, or would have been very different. In this sense, promoters are perhaps also driven both by self-gratification and by what Selye describes as the 'philosophy of gratitude' where 'most people would not like to admit even to themselves, that they do what they do just in order to make other people grateful' (1957, p. 287), which, while difficult to prove, is certainly one motivation for promoting. However, Basford's comment also illustrates the necessarily contradictory motives that drive promoters: on the one hand, he admits to a love of music, but in the next sentence shows the importance of financial reward, or, at least, the necessity of avoiding financial loss. As Frith (2010, n.p.) states, 'promoters necessarily have complex and contradictory motives which have to be understood in terms of their social roles and networks, and their self-perceived success and failure reflects their ability or willingness to deal with these contradictions'.

## Summary

This chapter has explored the role of the promoter from their own point of view, to ascertain what it is that promoters do and why they do it, and the three fundamental roles of the promoter expressed at the start of this chapter – planning, publicity, production – form the organising principle for the final part of the thesis. The chapter has shown, however, that the term 'promoter' covers a wide range of individuals and organisations and that the promotion of live music is therefore highly variable. It has argued, however, that promoters working at any level deal in risk – 'gambling' – but that that risk is both calculated and based on 'gut feeling'. For this reason, even promoters

outside the commercial sphere are necessarily entrepreneurial as they 'gamble' on whether their choice of artist and venue will appeal to enough people to make the risk worthwhile. However, while the promoter's role is highly complex and inherently risky, the promoter is usually behind-the-scenes at the live music event itself and the chapter has shown that the promoter's role is necessarily covert.

It has also been argued that to fully understand what promoters are and how they operate, an analysis of promoters' motivations and career pathways was necessary. Hence the chapter has shown that the routes to becoming a promoter are many, varied, and often unique. Finally, the chapter has investigated the motivations of promoters, illustrating how the promotion of live music is invariably fraught with contradiction and compromise.

Promoters do not work in a vacuum, however, and part of the reason the promotion of live music is so complex is the extent of the relationships that a promoter has to cultivate in order to promote successfully. The next part of the thesis therefore investigates the contexts in which a promoter works – the live music ecology – in two chapters to show that promoters both shape and are shaped by said ecology.

# Part Two: Chapter Five: Infrastructures within the live music ecology

## Introduction

The previous chapter sought to define promoters from a phenomenological perspective, and it showed that the promoter's role, while seemingly simple, is, in fact, highly variable and complex. This part of the thesis shows that the promoter's role is made more so by the necessity of working within external constraints and with a wide variety of people. Hence Part Two presents the findings from the empirical work in the context of the live music 'ecology' (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming). As stated in the introduction, live music is ultimately local music, 'bound up with the social production of place' (Cohen 1995, p. 444); by its nature, live music must happen in a particular locality. In this way live music is fundamentally different to recorded music, which, once recorded, is separated from its original production location(s). For all the global consolidation of live music business practice, local differences (demography, politics, history) therefore remain highly significant for the live music experience (Brennan *et al*, forthcoming).

To understand the importance of the local to live music promotion, then, Part Two explores the live music ecology in two halves. As Archer states, an ecological approach to music views it as being 'largely formed and changed (and appreciated) because of factors utterly outside itself' (1964, p. 29). Chapter Five therefore examines external constraints within the live music ecology to show how the promotion of live music is shaped by said ecology. Chapter Six deals with the complex networks of relationships within which the promoter is necessarily involved to show how promoters, in turn, *shape* the ecology. Thus the second part of the thesis lays the foundation for the remainder of the work by providing an initial assessment of the complexities of the live music ecology in which promoters operate.

To examine the infrastructures within the live music ecology, Chapter Five is in four interlinking sections. The first section explores the influence of local cultural policy on the promotion of live music. It shows that while such policies can be influential, those relating

to safety, infrastructure, and subsidy can be just as significant. Hence the second section investigates why and how live music is regulated, to argue that, while there may be conflict between promoters and the state, – particularly in areas with a high population density – such regulation is necessary to ensure the safety of the participants and hence the promoter's future. The third section explores the physical infrastructures within which promoters work, regarding planning and transport frameworks, focusing on how the state can directly impact on the promoter's event or venue. Finally, the chapter examines the economic infrastructures within which the promoter operates, to show that promoters benefit both directly and indirectly from a variety of forms of subsidy. The caveat being that the live music ecology constantly shifts and changes, and that the research below is liable to go out of date. What is important are the ways in which the state can and does impact on the promotion of live music, of relevance both within the UK and beyond.

## **Promoters and local policy**

The first section further illustrates that each local live music ecology is unique, and highlights how promoters within each one necessarily deal with widely varying circumstances. While Sheffield is the only one out of the three case study cities that contains a structured cultural industries quarter, all three city councils follow a cultural strategy, designed to enhance (or contest) popular meanings of these places (Gibson and Homan 2004). However, while a city council may follow such a strategy, the actions of other departments within the local authority may inadvertently obstruct it. For example, in their research into Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter (CIQ), Brown, O'Connor and Cohen (2000) found that while the Sheffield City Council supported the concept of the CIQ and would use its successes to their advantage, council departments such as licensing were actively hindering the efforts of the CIQ. They cite the example of the 'draconian' licensing department rejecting a development proposal for the disused Leadmill bus garage site within the boundaries of the CIQ due to the inclusion of a nightclub as part of the proposals, following a period of fifteen years (1980-1995) where no nightclub licences were granted (*ibid.*, p. 445). As they state, 'This is indicative of a failure by the city to realise the connection between cultural quarter, music industry, the wider scene and the cultural context of the city as a whole' (*ibid.*). On the other hand, it could be argued that

the (in)actions of the local authorities then force artists, audiences and promoters to be more creative in their use of other spaces, both licensed and unlicensed.

In this way, as Frith, Cloonan and Williamson (2009, p. 83) illustrate, rather than localised 'cultural policies', perhaps the most significant state policies for the 'making and unmaking' of local music culture instead involve licensing and planning laws, housing and education policies, and employment laws. Such policies and those who create and implement them can therefore have a significant impact on the provision of (licensed and unlicensed) live music venues and events. Promoters within a locality therefore have very different experiences as regards the state and regulation. Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol are all controlled by bureaucratic city councils comprised of 'dynamic structures' (Negus 1999, p. 16), namely the human activities of those who work there and, consequently, their attitude towards, and experiences of, live music. As a result, while each council adheres to local, national, and international regulations, it may interpret each one differently or pass its own byelaws. For instance, in Sheffield, many of the promoters interviewed complained about licensing regulations, whereas a more common complaint in Bristol was over noise restrictions, and in Glasgow the complaint was often around the lack of council support for outdoor advertising opportunities. The variability of policy and regulation across the UK was further highlighted by one promoter from the Scottish Highlands and Islands, who, when asked about the impact of noise regulations on her venues, replied, 'We just ignore them! They never come up and check!' (anonymised).

However, this study has shown that the city councils in the three case study cities appear to be actively supporting live music and the promotion thereof (although see later section on local authority arts budget cuts). The support is perhaps as a result of an increase in research into events and festivals in the twenty-first century in a bid to persuade local authorities of the economic worth and potential rewards of live music (for example, see Baker Associates 2007; 'Survey reveals ...' 2009; Smith 2010). In Sheffield, perhaps as a result of such research (and/or a change in staff), coupled with the city's recent successes on the world stage with the likes of Arctic Monkeys, attitudes within the Sheffield City Council towards live music certainly seem to have improved since Brown *et al's* research, with the Council allegedly investing £100,000 into the Tramlines urban music festival in 2010 (Deadman, personal communication, 18 November 2010).

Indeed, all three city councils invest in both venues and events. In Bristol, for example, recommendations that the local state should play a stronger role in the development of the night-time economy (Aubrey, Chatterton and Hollands 2002) appear to have been followed, and the Council invests in music via its flagship venue, the Colston Hall, and in the St Pauls Carnival and the Harbour Festival. In Glasgow, local authority support for live music has come in the form of venue construction and restoration (SECC, Glasgow's Concert Halls, for example) and festivals such as Celtic Connections and the Glasgow International Jazz Festival. In reference to council cooperation in Glasgow, senior promoter for DF Concerts and booker for King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, Dave McGeachan, stated that:-

Everyone works together, I think. I think, hopefully, the people we work with now – not just Glasgow but anywhere in Scotland – people see us bringing something new to the city, be it Glasgow or wherever, so they work with you well and try to accommodate everything as well (McGeachan 2010).

However, to return to Frith, Cloonan and Williamson's assertion that factors other than cultural policies impact greatly on live music, the rest of the chapter shows how state intervention in the form of regulation, planning policy and subsidy shapes the ecology and hence the promotion of live music. The next section therefore examines some of the regulations relating to live music promotion, to show that tensions often exist between a local authority's proactive 'strategic [cultural] policy' and its reactive 'operational policy' (Panichi 2008, p. 16). It argues that while there may be conflict between the interests of the promoter and the interests of the state, such regulations are in place to keep the participants safe and can, ultimately, assist the promoter's long-term sustainability and the 'health' of the live music ecology.

## **Regulatory infrastructures**

Scholars have long been interested in locality and its effect on musical 'scene' formation (Straw 1991; Shank 1994; Bennett and Peterson 2004; etc.) and the impact of legislation and policy on music within a locality (Gibson and Homan 2004; Cloonan, 2007; etc.). Frith *et al* have written about the regulation of live music in the UK and its impacts on local live music, and note that while the live music industry is heavily regulated, it is also simultaneously one of the *least* regulated parts of the music industries, as an industry

based on cash and within the night-time economy will inevitably be (2010, p. 17). However, as Brennan *et al* (forthcoming) note, the fate of live music has often been shaped by a regulatory framework which was *not* designed with live music as its epicentre, through licensing, health and safety and child protection policies. The following paragraphs will explore why this is the case.

The necessity of regulation for live music is discussed briefly by Frith *et al* (2010) within the contexts of licensing and advertising, but this section examines the necessity for regulation more broadly. Live music, as discussed in previous chapters, is specifically spatially and temporally located. For this reason, live music events require regulation because they can be dangerous places due to the combination of human and physical elements at a certain time in a certain place. Venues are therefore regulated by the total capacity deemed to be safe within the space and allowing for fire exits. In addition, the conjoining of human participants with sometimes differing expectations of behaviour can be problematic and cause 'public order problems' (White 2008). This may also be exacerbated by the inevitable use of legal and illegal drugs, and hence potentially unscrupulous and dangerous pushers.<sup>49</sup> The combination of human participants in venues along with the technology necessary to put on the show can also be dangerous: heavy and/or electrical equipment (often necessarily suspended from above) can cause injuries, crowds of people can be dangerous, and the prevalence of drugs and alcohol at events can prove a lethal combination.

Furthermore, music is sound and sound can be deemed noise and hence a pollutant (for a full discussion of the problems of noise 'pollution', see Johnson and Cloonan 2008). As the Sound Advice Working Group states, 'The music and entertainment industries are unique in that high noise levels and extremely loud special effects are often regarded as essential elements of an event' (2008, p. 6). Hence as Jeremy Allen, senior partner at licensing solicitors firm Poppleston Allen explained: 'If a venue is blasting out music that upsets the local community, then someone is going to have to deal with that and there is a strong argument that it should be the Home Office as part of overall licensing' (quoted in

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<sup>49</sup> Promoters may even become involved with the 'black market economy' themselves, as shown by Frith *et al* (2010, pp. 17-9); indeed, one (anonymised) small-scale promoter told me that as many as three quarters of the club promoters she knows deal drugs on the side to subsidise their events.

'Licensing move ...' 2010). To return to the population density figures for each city shown in Table 3-1 in Chapter Three, the necessity of noise regulation in urban areas becomes more apparent, and partly explains the differing attitudes to noise across the UK; Glasgow compared to the Highlands, for example, contains 32.93 persons per hectare against 0.08.<sup>50</sup> A denser population necessarily requires a higher level of regulation, particularly as regards noise, simply by dint of the fact that there are more people living closer together. Issues around noise are returned to later in the chapter.

As well as issues around noise and public order, the regulation of live music events is often focused on the *activities* surrounding live music – the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, dancing, etc. – rather than the content of the show *per se*. While the 'moral content' of films, for example, can be checked by the British Board of Film Classification and hence classified for particular age groups, and CDs can be marked as containing 'explicit content', the content of a live music event cannot always be checked in advance and is instead regulated via the activities associated with it. Hence rather than an 'eighteen certificate', events in which alcohol will be sold (inside the auditorium itself) are often directly prohibited to those under the age of eighteen via licensing regulations. Shows *may* be banned on moral grounds or relating to the likelihood of public disorder, either by the venue or by the local authority (for example, see Sex Pistols 1976; Buju Banton in Manchester 2004). Such bans tend to have been instigated on an *ad hoc* basis, however, rather than on specific laws pertaining to the content of the show (for more on the banning of popular music events, see Cloonan 1996). On the other hand, activities around live music have also been directly regulated via the musical content itself. One notorious example is the control of outdoor raves via the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, whereby police have been given powers to disperse parties based on whether the music being played contains 'sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats' (Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Data taken from SCROL website (2010).

<sup>51</sup> While beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that state intervention as regards live music outside the UK may be far more draconian. Bob Dylan's Beijing concert in April 2011 was performed 'strictly according to an approved programme', for example (Wieland 2011).

Finally, part of the promoter's role is to mediate the financial transaction, if necessary, between audience, artist and venue, and hence there may be large amounts of physical cash at the event. As alluded to in previous chapters, promoters are perceived by some to be somewhat dubious 'crooks and chancers' (quoted in Cloonan and Frith 2010), and, as Pete Jenner, ex-manager of Pink Floyd and one-time promoter, explained:-

Any business which involves lots of cash is dodgy. How do you become successful in this business? Basically, if you can get away with not paying as much as you really ought to be paying ... you can increase your profitability. That requires a certain level of deviousness, a certain ambiguity towards one's liability to the state and your client (Jenner 2008).

Jenner is insinuating here that some promoters may perhaps 'cut corners' around issues of participant safety, particularly as such measures obviously cost money for the promoter and/or venue, from sound proofing to employing a safety advisor. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the promoter is responsible to both the artist and the audience. They have a duty of care to both via their responsibilities as the 'occupier', and regulations relating to the health and safety of the participants should theoretically ensure a safer experience for all involved. Keeping people safe is not simply a pre-emptive measure, however, as accidents can have huge ramifications on the promoter's ability to stay in business. Hence for the promoter, the fewer accidents on their watch, the lower the chance of litigation and the higher the chance that their reputation within the networks that will be discussed in Chapter Six will remain intact. All the regulation in the world cannot prevent accidents occurring, but, arguably, live music events are safer than they ever have been, as a result of the intervention of the state.

The following section investigates four areas in which state legislation has impacted on the promotion of live music: licensing, health and safety, smoking bans, and noise. Other regulatory issues facing promoters include those around immigration and work permits, disability access, and gender and racial equality, although these are beyond the scope of this particular thesis. It should be noted that while many of the issues discussed below are the concern of the venue rather than an 'external' promoter, the importance of venues to promoters means that these issues also affect them, albeit sometimes indirectly.

## ***Licensing***

The major bone of contention between the government and those involved with live music in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been over the regulation of alcohol and entertainment licensing. In 2003(5) in England and Wales, the provision of alcohol and entertainment licences was moved from the control of magistrates directly to the local authority. The Licensing Act 2003 brings together a number of different licensing regimes under one act, in particular to control the sale of alcohol and the provision of regulated entertainment (Licensing Act 2003).<sup>52</sup> Hence the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport now defines live music as “Regulated entertainment”, which includes live music performances, [and] is covered by the Licensing Act 2003’ (DCMS 2007). This further entangles live music with the purchase and consumption of alcohol, in addition to the alcohol industry's continuing sponsorship of the live music industries (for example, see Atkinson 2008a; Masson 2010a). Such moves were intended to simplify the process for those requiring such a licence, and, as Brennan *et al* (forthcoming) note, the desire to bring together the confusing myriad of laws which covered this area in a coherent way ‘may have been its greatest achievement’. However, the reality of the changes to the licensing laws for some promoters and venues has meant a loss of earnings, as some so-called ‘nursery venues’ (Ashton 2009) such as pubs and coffee shops – for whom music is not a main activity – have been deterred by the legislation. It has effectively removed the old ‘two-in-a-bar’ rule which allowed up to two musicians at a time to perform in a venue without a licence (see Sharkey, quoted in ‘Is live music . . .?’ 2011).<sup>53</sup>

One of the perceived problems with the 2003 Act is that the wording is deliberately vague and allows each local authority permission to interpret the act as they see fit, thus illustrating the potential for national legislation to be interpreted differently at a local level (Deadman 2008; Hobson 2008; Green 2009). In practice, this means a very different

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<sup>52</sup> In 2009, the Licensing Act in Scotland was also amended, where the aim was to ‘tackle the country’s drinking problems’ (Scottish Government 2009b), although it does not specify regulated entertainment.

<sup>53</sup> It should be pointed out that at the time of writing (Spring 2011), Lord Clement-Jones’ Live Music Bill is about to advance to Committee stage in the House of Lords, which seeks to exempt small venues from the need to obtain a licence for the performance of live music if there is an audience of only two hundred people (Ashton 2011a).

regulatory landscape for promoters within different localities.<sup>54</sup> In Bristol, for example, the city's championing of twenty-four hour licensing has negatively impacted on small club venues whose business model has collapsed. While in the past, clubs were able to charge on the door after 11pm, twenty-four hour licensing has meant that bars are now able to open later and become 'clubs by proxy', which makes a door charge difficult to sustain (Dubuisson 2009). As Ben Dubuisson of Bristol's now defunct Native club complained, people will not pay to get into a club when they could go to a bar instead. In Glasgow, on the other hand, the city's crackdown on alcohol misuse means that no club or venue in the city centre is able to open past 3am and earlier in other parts of the city.

Local licensing regulations therefore impact on promoters differently within each of the case study cities, but differences are also apparent across the different 'art worlds'. Promoters within the 'art' and 'folk' discourses tend not to have problems with local authorities in the same way that those in the 'pop discourse' do. Indeed, some promoters, particularly those working with certain genres (notably metal and 'black' musics) and demographics (particularly youth and 'black' audiences) have had direct confrontations with local authorities concerning the events they try to stage.<sup>55</sup> Mark Hobson, owner of Sheffield's Corporation rock nightclub, for instance, complained that K-Corp – the under-eighteens rock/metal event that ran at his venue – was effectively shut down by the local authorities because they blamed the event for an increase in teenage alcohol consumption at a local park (Hobson 2008). The venue itself was eventually closed down temporarily as a result of supposed licensing infringements, but Hobson ended up taking Sheffield City Council to court and won. Corporation suffered further problems in 2008 when its new licence stipulated that minors were not allowed to be in the same room as people drinking alcohol in order to protect the younger audience. In practice, this meant that the venue was forced to segregate the audience and led to over-eighteens having to drink in a separate space during band changeovers, which had the unfortunate effect of causing 'binge-drinking' at these points as the adults rushed to 'neck' their

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<sup>54</sup> For an in-depth case study of one local authority's allegedly over-excessive and possibly 'unlawful' interpretation of the Licensing Act (2003), see King *et al's* investigation into the enforcement of the Act by St Albans District Council and the subsequent impact on live music (King *et al* 2009).

<sup>55</sup> For example, see Frith *et al*, for a report on the Metropolitan Police's Form 696, a 'risk assessment' form used by the force that asks for all performers' contact details and dates of birth and at one point included details of any particular ethnic group that was expected to attend (2010, p. 17).

drinks. Once again, Hobson took the Council to court and, after more than a year, won the case ('Divisive licensing ...' 2009).

The tensions often come, then, when venues/promoters' and local authorities' notions of best practice do not match. For instance, while Corporation had their own system of checks in place for under-eighteens, the authorities instead wanted the venue to use a hand stamp system and alcohol/no-alcohol zoning, which they believed was more effective. In this way, then, the conflict may be between 'top-down' policies and 'frontline' realities, as is also seen in the following subsection on health and safety. These cases also illustrate how the entangling of alcohol licensing with entertainment can restrict access to live music for certain groups as a result of the activities around it, namely alcohol consumption.

### ***Health and safety***

While there may be conflict between promoters and the state, legislation is ultimately there to protect the participants within the event. As well as licensing legislation, then, promoters and venues must adhere to a complicated array of health and safety regulations. Venues used by promoters have to satisfy the provisions of various legislative Acts of Parliament including: The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 (and 1984); The Public Entertainment Licence (Misuse of Drugs) Act 1997; and The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (cited in Challis 2003); more have been added since Challis' summary to which the live music industries must react as quickly as they can (White 2010). Health and safety regulations are set out by the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE), a non-departmental public body which is responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare in England, Wales and Scotland. The 1999 Event Safety Guide ('Pop Guide' or 'Purple Book'), published by the HSE, is used widely, especially within the higher echelons of the live music industry, and includes guidelines pertaining to (among others) risk assessments, planning, communication, crowd management, structures, electrical installations, food, drink and water.

Many interviewees commented on a discernible increase in the twenty-first century in health and safety regulations that affect live music. There were many who perceived such

regulations as ultimately positive, meaning a safer experience for all involved: '[The customers have] paid their money so they need to be safe, and if it benefits them then obviously it's a good thing' (Roberts 2010). As with licensing, local interpretation of national health and safety legislation can be problematic, however. Both Glasgow and Sheffield, for example (and, to an extent, Bristol, with its shipping industries), used to house many dangerous heavy industries and it was therefore imperative that health and safety regulations were particularly rigorous. Conflicts occur, however, when local councils attempt to apply health and safety regulations from another industry to the *live* music industries, as with the case with electrical or construction design management regulations (White 2010). Some promoters and venues believe that to use the same rigour for live music as for such industries is 'excessive' (Deadman 2008) and 'over-the-top' (Ross 2009). As Davy White, freelance safety advisor for Edinburgh-based Regular Music explained: 'There's health and safety officialdom that everybody knows about, and health and safety for the *sake* of health and safety. My job is about sensible health and safety' (2010, emphasis in original).

Local and national health and safety regulations may directly affect the promoter's ability to execute the appropriate environment for the 'genre frame' (Turino 2008) of their event and cause conflict between the performative expectations of the participants within the event and the legal requirements of the venue. The following complaint by a promoter of drum&bass – a subculture and music associated with dark, smoky dance floors – illustrates this point:-

There were a lot of times when we were in venues and they said we've got to have a light in the middle of the dancefloor – the council says we have to have this light for health and safety reasons – and that just kind of killed the vibe of the night (Ross 2009).

Tensions therefore arise when such regulations are perceived to be 'excessive' or inappropriate for a particular event. However, as discussed above, live music events are potentially dangerous occasions and health and safety regulations are ultimately in place to keep the participants – and the promoter's career – safe.

## ***Smoking bans***

The smoking bans of 2006 (Scotland and Northern Ireland) and 2007 (England and Wales) also appear to have had a not insignificant effect on the promotion of live music in relation to income, behaviour, and aesthetics, with artists also affected by the bans on smoking on stage (for example, see 'Playing with fire ...' 2007; 'Weller smoke ...' 2008). Venues that allowed smoking prior to the legislation have reported mixed feelings about the bans, with some in favour and some against. When asked if he would bring smoking back, King Tut's' bar manager Guillaume Coet replied that from a business point of view he would, but from a health and safety and hygiene perspective he would not. He explained that the bar was more profitable before the smoking ban and that, because he wants the business to thrive, 'if there were not those regulations, then we probably wouldn't create them ourselves' (Coet 2009). On the other hand, the landlord of Fagan's pub in Sheffield, Tom Boulding, stated that:-

Most people, including the musicians, are actually quite pleased not to play in a smoky atmosphere, because it actually, you know, probably *is* better ... I wouldn't say that we've lost any trade because of the smoking ban, *per se* (2009, emphasis in original).

However, one regular musician at the pub explained that while the small back room used to be 'like a fog' and is now a more pleasant environment without smoking (Whittaker 2009), many of the 'key players' are smokers and when they take a cigarette break, it breaks up the flow of the session, a fact obvious from participant observation at the venue. Similarly for club promoters, DJs may now struggle to keep people on the dancefloor as:-

Previously you'd have people dancing all night, with occasional visits to the bar. Now you get a lot more flow of people going out to smoke and coming back in, and a lot of people standing outside all night, which kind of has changed the atmosphere of events quite a lot (Ross 2009).

Hayley Pearce, ex-manager of Bristol's floating Thekla venue, concurs: 'It affects the atmosphere if you've got a dancefloor that's half full ... You can't let *go* as much, I suppose. Nobody likes getting on an empty dancefloor' (Pearce 2008, emphasis in original). The smoking ban has also affected the aesthetic of a live music event, and venues may now employ a smoke machine to produce a similar effect to a smoke-filled room or stage. As Paul Hepburn, sound (and occasionally lighting) engineer at King Tut's,

explained: '[Smoke means that] you see the lights, as opposed to them just being on the wall ... [The musicians] have a density on stage; they don't look like cardboard cut-outs' (2009, emphasis in original).

On the other hand, a cigarette smoke-free environment is obviously safer for the employees within an event, particularly the musicians and venue staff. One only has to remember the case of Roy Castle – a non-smoking musician who died from lung cancer apparently following years of playing in smoky jazz clubs – to realise that smoking bans are ultimately positive for all participants in the event. However, the enforced behaviour change caused by the smoking bans has caused other problems relating to the outside spaces around venues as staff increasingly have to police and clean up outdoor areas. Venues in residential areas in particular may face problems with noise from smokers, and complaints about the Thekla venue in Bristol have increased following the smoking ban as customers are forced to smoke on the outside deck:-

There probably *is* noise from people talking on the deck: yes, you can hear there. And if people are out there screaming, you know, you get people out there drunk, and they start shouting louder, over each other, *that* is a problem. It's usually club nights where they're noisier out on the deck till late, drunk, shouting (Pearce 2008, emphasis in original).

The next subsection examines the problems faced by promoters with sound leakage from *inside* the venue.

### ***Noise regulations***

As well as noise from customers outside the venue, sound leakage from inside the venue can also cause problems relating to external parties. Work by Johnson and Cloonan (2008, p. 175) shows how governments have intervened in matters of noise regulation at three levels: local environmental health policies; national Health and Safety regulation; and international regulation via European Union Directives. In the UK, DEFRA's 2005 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (England) and an extension of the 1996 Noise Act (England) in 2008 to include licensed premises allows local authorities in England and Wales to issue warnings and fines if they believed a dwelling to be emitting noise over the 'permitted level' at night. In Scotland, authorities have similar powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour (Noise Control) (Scotland) Regulations 2005. In this way, local authorities

have powers to deal with noise emitting from a venue relating to perceived disturbances to external parties.

Many live music venues (such as King Tut's Wah Wah Hut and Mr Wolfs) are conversions of older buildings not originally designed as music venues, and venues are often expected to organise and pay for their own noise restraints (soundproofing, double glazing, noise limiters, etc.). Outdoor events may suffer more serious problems with sound leakage as there are no walls to contain (or at least smother) the sound. Music festivals in the UK often take place on sites far from conurbations, hence sound leakage is therefore less of a problem. However, as local authorities begin to recognise that urban festivals are potentially lucrative events, this can cause problems for those living within the city centre. Following the 2010 Tramlines Festival in Sheffield, one nearby resident to the main stage on Devonshire Green complained that the event was:-

A total disgrace, the centre is just full of drunken idiots ... Playing music that you can hear clearly in private property is the most basic right [sic] in all society the right to property ownership, what if there [are] young families trying to look after children and [all] they can hear is 'dum-dum-dum'? Disgusting (william\_88 2010).

While city councils may profess to a desire for a lively city centre, the potential conflicts between the rights of existing venues and their customers and the rights of the residents regarding noise can clearly be seen, as can conflicts between 'strategic policy' and 'operational policy'. Live music is inherently noise producing and sometimes polluting, and while eyes can be closed, ears cannot. Problems relating to noise therefore often arise when one individual or group's leisure pattern conflicts with another group or individual, as the above example shows. Authorities attempt to mitigate such conflicts by regulating noise, but, as can be seen, the live music ecology is a fine balance between the interests of the promoter, the health and safety of the participants, and the rights of other citizens. Tensions arise particularly if, as a result of planning decisions, residential properties are built near to pre-existing venues, as is discussed later in the chapter.

### **Noise at Work**

The twenty-first century has also seen the introduction of noise legislation relating to employees inside the venue. The HSE's Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 –

based on EU Directives – were introduced in England in 2006,<sup>56</sup> in which venues are obliged to protect and inform employees if noise goes over 80dB and which require each employer to manage the risk to their employees and, where possible, freelancers. However, as the Sound Advice Working Group states, ‘The normal arrangements of employer/employee are sometimes difficult to determine and often vary with each engagement or show. Add to this the large number of self-employed people working as performers, sound engineers or technical crew and the picture can become very confused’ (2008, p. 16). The Group recommends a degree of personal responsibility for employees, thereby perhaps lessening the effectiveness of regulation in this area. Hence while King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut provides earplugs for its staff and orchestras now install Perspex screens between particularly loud instruments (percussion and brass) and other musicians on the stage, many musicians and crew now use their own moulded earplugs (Anderson 2010). Again, moves such as the Noise at Work regulations should be ultimately positive for artists – hearing loss is a major issue for professional musicians – but while it should be the promoter who is responsible as the artist’s temporary employee for the event, the reality of responsibility for employees’ hearing is perhaps a little more blurred.

Noise regulations cover employees at present, not audiences, but it is worth considering a case in the United States in 2010, whereby a couple successfully sued Whitesnake, the promoter and the venue for \$40,000 for hearing loss allegedly caused by an overloud PA system at a gig in Boston in 2003 (‘Whitesnake settles ...’ 2010). The new Noise at Work regulations have therefore met with dismay by some promoters and venues, some of whom suspect that noise regulations will eventually be redefined so as to include audiences as well as employees. One promoter and venue owner protested that, ‘it’s like, as an industry, “How many nails can they put in the *coffin*?”’ (Hobson 2008, emphasis in original). Another (anonymised) promoter complained that noise legislation had been ‘cooked up in Brussels by a bunch of numpties’ and that while ‘no-one in France or Brussels gives a shit about it ... the Brits, once again, leap to the forefront of regulation at a time where no-one else gives a flying chipolata about it!’

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<sup>56</sup> The ‘music and entertainment industry’ were allowed two extra years in which to prepare for such regulations.

## ***Communication break-down***

What is apparent from the above is a level of paranoia among some promoters as to the intentions of the state as regards live music. Rather than being celebrated for what they do and the positive economic and cultural impact they feel that they contribute to the locality, some instead feel that the local authorities are actively discouraging certain types of events. Other live music personnel feel aggrieved at the way in which regulations that affect live music in the UK are enacted:-

It doesn't matter what you seem to do at the moment, you're a criminal for doing it, aren't you? 'You've proved you're doing it so you're guilty, so let's see what they're doing wrong'. That's the whole obsession about it. It's 'Let's catch what they're doing wrong', not what they're doing right (Wolf 2010).

I would like to be *encouraged* to be here, rather than threatened with *closure* ... for trying to *help*, and give kids somewhere to *go*, and give them gigs, and ... I want to carry on doing *that*, and not be shut down for ... I feel like a *criminal*; I *felt* like a criminal (Hobson 2008, emphasis in original).

From the above comments, it can be seen that some promoters and venue owners feel a sense of persecution within the locality in which they operate. However, as has been shown, while there may be conflict between the interests of the promoter and the interests of the state, such regulations ultimately protect the participants within the event, and hence the promoter. Even 'not-for-profit' promoters are involved in a competitive business and are therefore concerned with the 'bottom line', hence regulations are in place to prevent them from cutting corners and affecting the safety of the participants.

The promoter does not simply work within regulatory infrastructures, however. While ecologies are comprised of people and the networks between them, as is discussed in the following chapter, they also consist of the physical elements – buildings, roads, flora, etc. – within which the promoter necessarily operates. The following section therefore examines such infrastructures, and shows again how there may be tensions between the interests of the promoter and the state, particularly as regards issues around planning and transport.

## Physical infrastructures

### *Planning*

To return to Frith's concept of a live music event (2008a), promoters require venues (spaces) in which to promote their events, which can be affected by local council planning and housing policies. As with regulation, local authority planning departments differ in their approach to policy and implementation, and while national planning guidelines exist, each local strategy is unique due to the particularities of the locality. Just as city councils may follow a cultural strategy, so too they may follow a 'city plan' which may use a zone-based approach whereby certain areas are designated 'residential', 'night-time leisure' or otherwise. In this way, long-term 'strategic' policies shape the live music ecology in terms of the kinds of developments that are allowable and may impact on venues' permitted closing times and their uses.

The principal problems for promoters and venues are around noise 'pollution', as discussed above, and tenants' rights, particularly when new residential developments or conversions are constructed in what were traditionally business-only areas. Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol, for example, have all experienced an increase in 'city-centre living' in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and, as city centres are traditionally the location for live music venues, this has impacted on the promotion of live music in some cases. To illustrate this, Ben Dubuisson decried a lack of understanding within Bristol City Council as regards live music and clubbing:-

A lot of people have moved into the city centre, [but] the clubs have been there *before* with licences, and you'll get someone move in, who *wants* to move into a vibrant city centre, but then complains about noise (Dubuisson 2009, emphasis in original).

In this way, the potential for conflict between the first occupant and the new tenants can clearly be seen. On this point, it is worth examining the situation in Australia, where attempts have been made in some states to uphold the right of the first occupant. This means that developers and potential new residents should consider existing venues within a 'live music precinct', while new venues similarly have to consider existing residents and businesses (see Cloonan 2007; Panichi 2008). In the UK, it appears that no specific legislation relating to music venues is forthcoming at a national level, and local

planning policies often refer to existing regulations, particularly around noise. In Sheffield, however, while planning policies are in place to protect the living conditions of residents in the city centre, if an established music venue is already in situ, the interests of that venue will be protected (Bond 2011). In this way, planning authorities can protect both venues and residents from potentially unscrupulous developers.

Outside of the night-time leisure zones in city centres, other sites of conflict between venues and planning departments can occur in newly gentrified inner-city areas perceived as key sites of creativity, lifestyle and 'alternative subcultures', whose original residents have played an 'unwitting role' in such a 'gentrification narrative' (Gibson and Homan 2004; see also Cohen 2007). In Glasgow, for example, the Tchai Ovna venue on Otago Lane is under threat (as of Spring 2011) from a proposed housing development. In Sheffield, Stag Works and the adjoining Portland Works are also under threat. These are somewhat dilapidated former 'little mesters'<sup>57</sup> workshops in the Little Sheffield area of the city, outside the city centre. Both are home to musicians, the largest concentration of rehearsal and recording studios in the north of England, artisans, music industries such as promoters and managers, and the occasional (usually unlicensed) party or gig. Repeated plans to develop both the buildings and the land around into 'luxury flats' have been met with objections, mainly around noise, and the tenants are under constant pressure to fight to keep their businesses safe and maintain the informal but vital networks within the two buildings (Marsden 2009). New developments may even require the demolition of existing music venues which has obvious ramifications for live music promoters; recent high-profile examples include London's Hammersmith Palais and the Duchess in Leeds. In Sheffield, as another example, the demolition of the Blind Institute to make way for 'luxury flats' meant that the promoters of the Electric Blanket event were forced to find another venue (Goldthorpe 2008).

However, while planning developments may impact negatively on existing live music venues, there may also be benefits. Local authorities may invest in the construction of new music venues, such as The Sage Gateshead, or in the renovation of existing ones, such as Stockton's Grade II listed Globe Theatre (Barrett 2011). Benefits of city-centre

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<sup>57</sup> Little mesters are self-employed artisans, often cutlery workers, who rent workshop space in a factory and who work alone or employ a small number of workers.

developments may also come in the shape of a (usually) young and affluent population on venues' doorsteps without issues such as the availability of late-night transport. Other benefits may be more unexpected. Staff at The Boardwalk in Sheffield, for example, were concerned that they would receive noise complaints when a new hotel was constructed adjacent to their venue. However, complaints have not been a problem and one unforeseen advantage has been that many of their artists and travelling audiences use the hotel for accommodation (Wilson 2008). In this way, the activities of the state in regard to physical infrastructures may both benefit and hinder the promotion of live music.

Physical infrastructures are not limited to bricks and mortar, however, as the ownership of venues also affects the promotion of live music and in which, in some cases, the state has a role to play (see Competition Commission 2007; 2010a). Changes in ownership do not just affect dedicated music venues, however. Pubs which host live music, for example, are increasingly owned by massive 'pubcos' such as Enterprise Inns and Punch Taverns. The impact of pubcos can clearly be seen in Sheffield, where pubcos in recent times have been selling pubs and leases or changing their uses, all of which impacts on the local live music ecology. For example, pubs which used to be a recognised part of the 'entry-level' music venue circuit included The Lescar, The Grapes, The Shakespeare, and The Cricketers, but all are owned and leased by pubcos and, as a result of pressure from the owners, the pubs no longer stage live music events. However, other pubs such as The Frog and Parrot, The Harley and The Cremorne are now filling the gaps, highlighting both the vulnerability and the resilience of local music ecologies.

In this way, physical infrastructures within the live music ecology are constantly changing, and in some cities, it seems that for every club or theatre that closes, another springs up elsewhere (Masson 2007). What is of concern, however, is whether city council authorities are well enough aware of what they already have and whether it is worth saving as a piece of the city's history. As Chris Wilson from Sheffield's Boardwalk explained, 'we've been trying to put it out that this is basically Sheffield's own version of the Cavern Club ... and I don't think Sheffield City Council realises what they've *got* here' (2008, emphasis in original). For all the new venues built (The O<sub>2</sub>, Camden's Roundhouse, etc.), for a 'healthy' local live music ecology, there must be a balance of venues, in terms of size, scale, 'amateur', professional' (Frith, Cloonan and Williamson 2009). Planning

authorities would therefore perhaps do well to maintain a regularly updated map of live music venues within their locale. The above subsection has shown, then, that localised planning policies and implementation can impact on venues for live music and hence on the work of the promoter. In a similar vein, the policies and decisions of transport planning authorities may affect the live music ecology, as is now explored.

### ***Transport***

Accessibility to venues via public and private transport is another external issue faced by promoters, and one which can both influence their choice of venue in the planning process and subsequently impact on the success of their event. For example, the availability of public transport at the start and end of an event can affect audience numbers, and a promoter must work out their running order to correlate to the habits and patterns of their expected audience. Hence at King Tut's, the venue attempts to finish the show at a suitable time in order that people do not have to leave early to catch the last bus or train home. On Fridays and Saturdays, on the other hand, they are able to close later because fewer customers will have the same incentive to leave early and because public transport tends to run later at the weekend (Francis 2009). At the Lakota club in Bristol, the nights finish in the early hours of the morning, and I interviewed two young women from Frome who were aiming to catch the first train back from Bristol at 5.50am; the club opened till 6am which enabled them to stay for almost the entire event. Changes to public transport times and systems can therefore impact negatively (and positively) on a promoter's event, particularly if the venue is 'off the beaten track'. For example, transport issues in 2010, caused by underground tube improvement works, reportedly caused problems for the Matter nightclub in London's O<sub>2</sub> complex, with clubbers experiencing difficulties in getting to and from the venue late at night (Masson 2010c). Indeed, the construction of the new underground railway line, Crossrail, meant that London's legendary Astoria was forced to close permanently ('London's Astoria ...' 2008).

Private transport and the necessity of adequate parking also impacts on promoters' events. At Glasgow's SECC, for example, although there is onsite parking for over two thousand cars and a dedicated train station, there is often congestion after shows as the road infrastructure appears inadequate to deal with the number of cars in use; more than

one audience member explained that they attend few events at the venue as a result of this issue. At the Lynyrd Skynyrd show at the Clyde Auditorium in March 2010, the problem was exacerbated both by an accident on one of the major A-roads leading in to the venue, and by the fact that the X Factor Live show was taking place at the same time in Hall Four, within the same complex. Promoters and venues can attempt to circumvent such problems by encouraging customers to use public transport, or even providing transport themselves. A number of festivals in the UK, for example, encouraged by not-for-profit campaign group A Greener Festival, organise subsidised coaches from a number of locations around the UK and encourage car sharing, which also aids the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by mass numbers of people using their own transport (Masson 2010e).

Now that issues around local cultural policy, regulation and physical infrastructures have been addressed, the final issue to be examined is the matter of public and private subsidy, to show how this too shapes the live music ecology within which promoters operate.

## **Economic infrastructures**

The final section of this chapter examines the role of the state and other external parties on the economic infrastructures within which live music takes place, and examines the impact of global recession on the promotion of live music. As Frith points out in his 2007 article, some parts of the live sector need subsidy, as 'There are limits on the size of the audience one can physically reach in a live show and the costs of live music continue to rise faster than general inflation and cannot be covered by ticket price alone' (p. 3). For example, the performance of classical and contemporary art music has become [almost] entirely reliant on state subsidy, as 'To price tickets according to concerts' true costs would be to restrict entry to a small super-rich elite' (ibid., pp. 2-3). Subsidy, then, may come from private commercial investors – such as telecommunications companies or alcohol manufacturers – from the public purse, or, as is now more often the case, combinations of the two, thereby further blurring the boundaries between 'public' and 'private'. Subsidy may be direct, indirect or in-kind, whether from the promoter as a cultural investor; an external sponsor or funder; record labels; the artists themselves; audience volunteers; or other sources.

Public subsidy for live music may be local (for example, via local authorities), national (for instance, via Arts Councils or direct from central government), or international (for example, via European Regional Development Funds). However, while many promoters and venues may not directly receive public subsidy, they may indirectly benefit from state investment. As Brennan and Webster (2011, p. 17) show, public investment in venues and festivals means that although ‘commercial’ promoters see themselves as the ones taking the financial risk, ‘some of the economic risk is, in fact, distributed and borne, in part, by the public sector’. For example, the initial investment into Glasgow’s SECC was made by the Scottish Development Agency, Glasgow City Council and Strathclyde Regional Council in 1985 (SECC 2010b), a venue that now hosts live music events promoted by ‘commercial’ promoters such as DF Concerts, Live Nation, and 3A.

Public subsidy often contains remits around audience development and education to ensure that the investment offers ‘public value’ (Arts Council England 2010). Private sponsorship, on the other hand, may have advantages in the form of capital investment with fewer ‘hoops’ to jump through, but occasional disadvantages in the form of artistic control or influence by such partnerships. For example, the Director of the Glasgow International Jazz Festival, Jill Rodger, recalled the problems she endured as a result of sponsorship from the Royal Bank of Scotland, whereby she reported feeling ‘quite bullied by them, really. I mean, they would be mystery shoppers as well, you know; they would phone and if we didn’t answer “Royal Bank Jazz Festival” we would be black marked’ (Rodger 2009, emphasis in original). Arguably, however, without the RBS investment, the event would not have been possible at that time, but, as she continued, ‘sometimes you spend *more* on effort and managing the sponsorship than you’re actually getting in cash’ (ibid., emphasis in original).

Problems may also be caused by *inappropriate* sponsorship. For example, one (anonymised) artist was not invited back to perform at the (then) Carling Leeds Festival after the lead singer described the Carling beer he was drinking on stage as tasting like ‘a pile of rats piss’. As Barry Hogan, organiser of All Tomorrow’s Parties, explains: ‘I don’t want to have to say to Fuck Buttons, “You guys can’t play because you’ve got swearing in your name, and Evian doesn’t like it”’ (quoted in Davis 2010). In this way, the tension comes between the necessity of external investment – ticket revenue does not always cover all the costs of an event – and the limits of control by the investor. Promoters

therefore necessarily balance the risks of self-investment against the risks associated with taking on external investors, whether public or private.

The economic infrastructures in which promoters operate are changing, however, partly as a result of the global economic crisis that began in September 2008 with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment bank. Cuts in funding by central government have been made to Arts Council England, for example, and as of 2011, local authorities in Bristol, Somerset, Manchester, and North Yorkshire are making swingeing cuts to their arts funding, a move perceived as 'dangerous' by politicians from all three parties, aware of the importance of local government funding for the arts sector (A. Smith 2011; Woolman 2011). 'State promoters' are therefore increasingly being encouraged to look for private sponsorship to boost their existing subsidies. Indeed, Creative Scotland is advocating a semantic change to its subsidies: from a 'funding' culture to an 'investing' culture (Dibdin 2010); a move from aesthetic values to commercial ones.

As well as changes to the funding landscape, the global financial situation has meant that banks are lending less money to small businesses (Langford 2010), which may also have a direct impact on promoters. The entire business of live music relies on credit – suppliers often require payment before the promoters can access the ticket income – and promoters generally have no assets in the way that a recording company does, unless they own a venue or can monetise their customer databases. As promoter Pete MacCalman explained:-

A few years ago it used to be a lot easier because you just got an overdraft extension or another credit card when credit was free and easy. It's been tight the last few years with the drying up of that easy credit, particularly as banks begin looking at risk assessments of your company and stuff. But promoting is quite a risk based activity, and your average bank manager just couldn't handle it, even the thought of it. So it's quite difficult for them to understand your business ethos (MacCalman 2009).

Economic downturns may also impinge on artists' ability and desire to tour, which directly affects promoters and venues as artists may be reluctant to tour if they fear their audience numbers will be down as a result of global recession (Wilson 2008).

As a result of the recession, venues and promoters across the three case study cities and beyond reported lower ticket sales than average. While London's O<sub>2</sub> arena, for example, maintained its record as the world's best-selling venue by selling more than one million tickets for events in the first six months of 2010, arena director Sally Davis admitted that, 'When it comes to the number of events we're hosting in 2010, it isn't as busy as last year and that's a trend we're seeing across the UK industry' (quoted in 'British and Irish ...' 2010). This reflects a general trend across the UK in 2010 as the number of people who attended events at UK arenas fell by a fifth, and the nation's largest indoor venues saw a downturn in the number of shows they hosted ('X Factor shines alone ...' 2011). DF Concerts, as another example, promoted eight stadium shows in 2009, booked two years previously, but there were no stadium shows in 2010 and only Snow Patrol in Bellahouston Park (Ross 2011). DF Concerts' Dave McGeachan had also noticed that artists who would previously have sold two thousand tickets before the recession were struggling to do so in 2010, but also that people who used to attend seven or eight gigs a month were now only attending gigs two or three times a month (McGeachan 2010). In this way, factors outside the promoter's direct control may impact on the local live music ecology and hence the promotion of their events, as is further explored in Chapter Nine.

## Summary

This chapter has shown that the promoter must negotiate a plethora of issues within the frameworks of the particular live music ecology, relating to safety, physical infrastructure, and subsidy, and that these frameworks shape the live music ecology. It has argued that while tensions exist between the parameters set by promoters and those set by others, regulatory, planning and economic frameworks set by the state are necessary. Unlike record companies that have no responsibilities to the consumer once the product has been sold, the promoter's 'product' is the live music event, which involves the combination of physical and human elements, hence the safety of the participants is paramount. The promoter is responsible for a duty of care to both the artist and the audience via their responsibilities as the 'occupier'; how they do this is further discussed in the third and final part of this thesis.

Ultimately, then, the external constraints placed on a promoter relate to health and safety, from a practical to an abstract level. Obviously, participants should be safe at the

event itself, but health also relates to the development and maintenance of a 'healthy' live music ecology, particularly in densely populated areas, in the sense that the local and national authorities are championing live music; that the industrial landscape is not allowed to spiral out of control; and that audiences are not paying over the odds or being ripped off, and neither are the artists and crew. Arguably, without local and national cultural policies, the creative industries sector would struggle; the difficulties that faced Sheffield's Leadmill in the 1990s, for example, were partly because there were no live music champions to argue the cause within the local authority and therefore little understanding of the potential benefits.

Without physical and regulatory restraints, live music could potentially happen anywhere, which, as seen above and shown in Johnson and Cloonan's work (2008), can cause damage to the social fabric as a result of noise, alcohol misuse, and other public health and social issues. Without industrial restraints such as the Competition Commission keeping check on potential monopolies, multi-nationals would be free to wreak havoc on the UK's live music sector (although arguably, as posited in the following chapter, the lack of understanding about the live music sector by the UK government has already allowed this to happen). Economically, state subsidy allows certain art forms – opera, ballet, orchestras – to survive without wholly embracing the commercial agendas of private sponsorship. Hence the promotion of live music requires a delicate and difficult balance of both a *laissez faire* and state interventionist approach that allows promoters to compete in a free market but that keeps artists, audiences and promoters safe.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the live music ecology is explored in two halves. This chapter has investigated the infrastructures within the local live music ecology to show how the promotion of live music is shaped by said ecology. The following chapter deals with the complex networks of relationships with which the promoter is necessarily involved, to show that promoters, in turn, also shape the live music ecology.

# Part Two: Chapter Six: Networks within the live music ecology

## Introduction

This chapter is the second to present the findings from the empirical work in the context of the live music ecology. It argues that live music promoters also *shape* said ecology via national and international networks and deals between them and a variety of key figures within the live music event. This chapter therefore expands on the concept that live music must happen in a particular locality and that each locality is unique, but it argues that part of the reason for this is as a result of the variety of promoters that operate within the locale. The chapter illustrates this in two sections. The first section argues that the many social and business relationships a promoter has to develop and maintain affect who and what is promoted within a locality. Second, it examines the formal and informal networks within the live music sector in which the promoter operates, and argues that the changing structures within the wider national and international live music industries in the twenty-first century are affecting the *local* live music ecology.

## The accumulation of social capital

Cloonan and Frith (2010) suggest that promoters work within two kinds of timeframe: short-term and long-term, whereby 'Immediate profitability has to be weighed against future opportunities' (n.p.). In other words, promoters are concerned with the 'immediacy of a particular gig' (ibid.) but must also attempt to build and maintain a long-term relationship with a variety of parties within the live music ecology. Such an ecology consists of 'core' and 'periphery' individuals and organisations, the former consisting of Frith's (2008a) requirements for a live music event: promoters, venues, artists, and audiences, technology (sound and lighting) operators and suppliers; the latter including security firms, caterers, transportation companies, the media, ticket agents and local authorities. Promoters therefore rely on formal and informal networks with such core and peripheries in order to carry out their events, as is discussed in this and later chapters. Within these networks, the promoter attempts to accrue social capital, whether directly or indirectly, in the form of contacts, 'favours', and loyalty, to ensure their long-term career. In this way, the social capital being earned is more akin to Lin's (2001) and

Bourdieu's (2007) definitions whereby social capital is 'investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace' (Lin 2001, p. 19) rather than in Putnam's more civic sense of the term (1995).

The following subsections therefore show how the development and maintenance of social capital with artists, audiences and other key figures is vital to a promoter's success. Drawing on Becker's interactionist approach (1963; 1982), they also explore how promoters are perceived by these figures and how this can positively and negatively impact on promoters' accrual of such capital. Chapter Nine further illustrates the value of social capital by examining external crises which promoters must contend with, and how they may deal with these by way of their networks.

### ***Artists***

Promoters are both local cultural champions and cultural importers; they both promote local artists and bring non-local artists from around the UK and from around the world into a locality. Promoters, in some respects, are also somewhat akin to record companies' A&R men, signing up artists at an early stage in their career to ensure loyalty and hence (hopefully) financial reward at a later date if the artist is successful. Hence the promoter's function as 'artist liaison' at the event itself – unless mediated via a promoter's representative ('rep') or other intermediary – is twofold. The first is to administer the transaction between artist and venue, and artist and audience, and then agree the settlement with the artist or the artist's intermediary (often a tour manager). The second, equally important function of the promoter at the event is to build relationships with artists and their intermediaries, to ensure long-term loyalty and maintain important networks. Hence as Regular Music's Mark Mackie explained:-

A lot of the tour managers I know anyway – know quite well – so you say 'Hello' and have a glass of wine with them halfway through the night or something, or just sit and chat to them, and, you know, just chew the fat and go, 'What's happening?' You know, 'How was your Dutch tour, and are you off to Norway next, and ...?' You show an interest, and build up knowledge as well, and relationships are formed that way (Mackie 2008).

Promoters and venues are therefore able to claim an advantage over others by looking after artists and their intermediaries well, and, in this way, they accumulate social capital.

As DF Concerts' Dave McGeachan (2010) explained, 'King Tut's is hopefully well above most venues because of the way we treat bands'.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, as one panellist at the 2010 Festival Awards conference stated, artists supposedly cannot see past the first row of the audience, hence each show becomes indistinguishable from the next; he claimed that what then stays in the artist's mind is their treatment by the promoter backstage, whether directly or indirectly via the promoter's rep.

One of the main roles for the promoter (or rep) at the live music event, then, is to make sure everyone is happy, to 'keep everyone sweet' (Francis 2009). For this reason, as Hayley Pearce, ex-manager of Bristol's Thekla, explained:-

It's really important that these bands feel like they've been looked after and that they've enjoyed their experience, so that they'll come back. Because if they have a bad experience, they'll say, 'We're not going back *there* again!' (Pearce 2008, emphasis in original).

Penny Blackham, manager of The Crookes (and ex-live events manager at the University of Sheffield's Union of Students), complained that some bands tour the UK and find that the promoter or venue has not even put a poster up to publicise the gig, hence for her, 'We know where we'll go again and we know where we probably *won't* go again' (2010, emphasis in original). For towns and cities with a large number of venues and promoters, this is less of a problem than for places with fewer. In this way, the treatment of the artist by the promoter can impact on who and what is promoted within a locality. The treatment of the artist is also dependent on their status, as is covered shortly.

Promoters are sometimes given a bad press by artists, however (see, for example, 'Elbow's Guy Garvey ...' 2010). Part of the perceived mistrust of promoters by artists is because of less than ideal treatment by the promoter, or treatment unbecoming of the artist's status. Another reason for mistrust by artists is perhaps linked to the covert role of the promoter; artists may be unaware of the planning that goes into an event, and the promoter's role at the event itself may be hidden or mediated via another individual, such as a tour manager, compère, or stage manager. Another part of this perceived mistrust stems from the sometimes unreliable behaviour of promoters. At one small-scale gig I

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<sup>58</sup> King Tut's provides food for touring bands, an act made possible because the venue contains a commercial kitchen, but which is somewhat rare among three hundred capacity venues in the UK.

attended in Glasgow, for example, the promoter had booked the acts in advance but 'disappeared' on the night, informing the venue that the event was cancelled but not informing the acts themselves. The two bands (one of which was on tour from the United States) decided to play the gig anyway and the venue generously provided the room, the sound engineer and the door person for no charge.

### **Artist status**

The status of an artist can easily be seen in their treatment by promoters and backstage crew. While artists at the top end of their career are often treated royally by promoters and crew – clothes washed by a member of the production team, meals cooked for them, drinks provided, transport and accommodation arranged for them, etc. – those just starting out or declining in status may be treated less well. In a sense, an artist's economic success directly correlates to the level of external assistance they receive at all stages of the event. Hence for an artist who is able to sell a high number of tickets (economic success), and which therefore necessitates the use of a larger venue, the external assistance for their show will be accordingly high. Conversely, an artist whose economic potential is low is expected to spend more of their own economic capital and effort in order to accomplish their performance (see Chapter Four on risk). Although keen not to overemphasise the *economic* advantages of building and maintaining a good relationship with an artist, production assistant at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, Sam Francis, explained that there was no favouritism or 'special treatment *per se*' for certain artists over others, 'but if we've got the money there, and we *know* that we're gonna get the money back, we don't mind spending a bit of extra money on them' (Francis 2009, emphasis in original).

The higher the status of the artist, however, the less likely it is that a promoter will have personal contact with the artist before or after the show. Once the size and scale of the show increases and more intermediaries are employed by the artist, promoter and venue in order to liaise with other intermediaries, the artist-promoter relationship may be diminished to a purely economic one, as noted by Cloonan (2010). Mark Mackie (2008), for example, admitted that his contact with the artists themselves could be minimal, limited to a short chat and a drink at the soundcheck or after the show. For a promoter at a large-scale event, then, the important intermediary becomes the artist manager or tour

manager; the individual usually employed by the agent or record label who is charged with organising the requirements for tour personnel such as accommodation and food. One Bristol-based promoter admitted that his primary responsibility at an event was to the tour manager, above even the audience and the artist, because the tour manager reports back to the agent:-

If there were mistakes made – for instance, if there weren't enough security – then the tour manager would certainly let the agent know and he'd be like, 'So [promoter X], how come we didn't have enough security for the show?' It's my responsibility. So yeah, the tour manager is *hugely* important, yeah, because he reports to the agent, and the agent then decides whether he wants me to do the show next time (anonymised, emphasis in original).

The tour manager, then, is regarded as the 'top of the tree' and is the person ultimately responsible for the entire tour once it is on the road, in terms of looking after and managing the crew. At smaller scale shows, however, the artist themselves may be fulfilling the role of tour manager, hence the roles are telescoped (West 2008).

As an artist's career progresses, however, their status may rise or fall, depending on their economic worth to record labels, agents and promoters. A fall in status dramatically alters their treatment by a promoter, and, as production manager Crae Caldwell explained, artists are hyperaware when their status diminishes; the size of venue decreases as does the size of the rider<sup>59</sup>:-

But they're used to having this [and] that, and then you're going, 'Well, no, that's not going to happen, because you're not the headliner'. They kind of start getting stropky because they're used to having things their way. So it gets difficult. The difficult bands are the bands on their way down (Caldwell 2009).

In this way, promoters must understand the status of an artist and treat them accordingly as this can impact on their relationship with the next key figure: the agent.

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<sup>59</sup> The rider is so named because it 'rides' with the contract; it stipulates the artists' required provisions and facilities before, during, and after the show.

## *Agents*

The role of the agent is to represent the artist to maximise their earnings from a tour (Competition Commission 2010b, p. B3), and to act as a 'valve' between the thousands of artists and the relatively limited worldwide body of promoters (Music Managers Forum 2003). An established promoter will usually deal with artists who are represented by an agent, particularly within the commercial sphere, and one promoter may deal with a number of different agents (Mackie 2008). The agent will tender for an artist's tour and evaluate bids from promoters to handle that tour (or part of a tour).<sup>60</sup> An artist or agent may choose a promoter because of the promoter's contacts, expertise in a particular genre of music, or in a particular geographic area (Competition Commission 2010b, p. B4). The agent will negotiate terms with promoters on behalf of the artist's management, receiving between ten and twenty per cent of the artist's tour income in return (ibid.). The agent and promoter will also discuss the appropriate support artist<sup>61</sup> for the tour, if necessary, in terms of what suits the artist's image, or who a record label is trying to 'break' (Passman 2004, p. 354). The decision as to the support artist is dependent on the status of the headline artist to an extent; the headline artist may be at such a level that they decide the support act themselves.

Relationships with agents are therefore vital to the long-term future of a promoter: if they have a good relationship with an agent, they will have access to the agent's roster and most lucrative acts. Consequently promoters must accumulate social capital with agents in two ways: first, by doing a good job on the tour; and second, by maintaining a personal relationship with the agent. Hence as Dave McGeachan explained: 'We've got to get on with the agents and they're all mostly nice guys and we keep in touch with them and treat most of them as friends' (McGeachan 2010). Promoters may also accumulate social capital with agents by taking 'lower status' artists on an agent's roster in order to win bids for the higher status (and more lucrative) artists. Promoter Stuart Basford

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<sup>60</sup> However, as noted by Brennan and Webster (2011, p. 3), the division between the promoter's and agent's responsibilities is much more complex in reality: a promoter may also be an agent (and, indeed, a manager or a performer) and in practice roles within the music industries are continually shifting.

<sup>61</sup> Support acts are there to 'warm up' the audience, thus whetting their appetite for the main act but not overshadowing them (Cohen 1991, p. 84).

explained that with some agents, to take an artist of the status of Jackson Browne or Joan Baez, 'you've also got to take somebody at the bottom end and take a gamble. You know, somebody who might only get eighty or a hundred people in' (Basford 2009). He went on to admit that this arrangement between promoters and agents was implied rather than explicit but understood by both parties. Small-scale promoters, however – often 'enthusiasts' – may try to bypass the agent altogether, especially if they have a personal relationship with the artist. As promoter Alan Deadman remarked wryly: 'Some artists have agents but because they like you, they'll let you book directly, cutting out the poor old agent and their fee' (2008).

It is worth mentioning here the somewhat curious disregard that some in the live music industries hold for formal contracts between promoter and agent, perceived by some as being 'not worth the paper they're written on' (Caldwell 2009). However, this disregard can be explained by the significance of social capital within the live music industries, therefore the concept of a contract is anathema to some. As Karen Taylor, Head of Events and Commercial Development at Glasgow's Concert Halls, explained: 'We send [contracts] out, we very rarely get them back, *but* that is a contract of an intention [just] by sending it ... But generally there's a lot of trust involved in the transactions as well' (Taylor 2010). While formal contracts may be used at the start of the relationship between promoter and venue or promoter and agent, in the twenty-first century an email conversation (or even telephone conversation or handshake) may be regarded as being as legitimate as a signed contract. Contracts do exist, however – it is perhaps unlikely that for events such as the cancelled Michael Jackson tour of 2009, a team of lawyers had not prepared a lengthy legal contract in advance – and will usually stipulate the conditions under which that venue or artist is hired (including cancellation clauses) and detail responsibilities and liabilities in the event of accidents or problems.

The accompanying rider is often treated more seriously than the contract, then, as it comprises a 'kind of shorthand' that allows artists to see if promoters have met their obligations (Fonarow 2006, p. 286). The most infamous example of a rider was that of Eddie Van Halen, who would insist that every brown M&M be removed from the dishes of sweets which dotted the backstage area. Rather than this being petulant histrionics on the part of the artist, it was in fact a canny move on the part of lead singer, David Lee Roth. Van Halen tours were extremely complex and potentially dangerous technical

productions that toured to a variety of venues and used a number of different promoters. By burying the 'no brown M&Ms' clause in the rider, the band were testing the promoter at each show: if there were no brown M&Ms, it meant the promoter had read the contract and things were going to run smoothly. However, 'If you saw a brown M&M, guaranteed you'd find technical error after error, all of which would happen during the show' (Roth, quoted in Bennun 1999). The promoter's conduct and adequacy is therefore monitored by the agent via devices such as the rider.

### ***Audiences***

While the relationship between promoter and agent may be relatively close, the promoter's relationship to the audience, on the other hand, is highly variable. As discussed in Chapter Four, the promoter's direct relationship depends on the size and scale of the operation, the promoter's business model, and, to an extent, the promoter's personality. Promoters using the business-to-consumer model build trust with their audiences in order that they keep coming back; purely business-to-business promoters rely on other intermediaries to do this for them via venues, venue staff and ticket agents. Hence an audience member who is a regular customer of King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, say, is often more loyal to the venue rather than to DF Concerts, the promoter, and may be unaware of the identity of DF (even though their name will appear on the ticket), instead often perceiving King Tut's as the promoter of the event.

Promoters working at a small scale may have a personal relationship with their customers, building social capital with them to increase their loyalty to both their event and/or to a particular venue or artist. As Brennan and Webster (2011, p. 15) point out, however, 'it is difficult to conceive of a giant company like Live Nation cultivating personal relationships with their audiences, if only because of the sheer volume of live events it promotes annually'. The physical distance between a corporate promoter or venue booker and the show itself also makes a personal relationship between such a promoter and their audience difficult, hence the promoter's role remains covert.

Just as promoters are sometimes perceived negatively by artists, the online survey contained a number of complaints that showed how some promoters are sometimes perceived negatively by their audiences. The motivation and commitment of the

promoter may actively affect the experience of the artist and audience, and some survey respondents certainly took umbrage with promoters they felt were less than committed to the event. Other disgruntled customers perceive certain venues and promoters as inauthentic and economically driven, while some customers see certain promoters and venues as exploitative of both artists and audiences:-

Some venues are shamelessly cynical, starting support bands before the doors even open, ejecting punters the moment the band's last note is played so they can start a club night, or letting in punters for unrelated club nights while the bands are still on, causing disruption and noise while the band's last song is played (Online Survey Respondent [OSR] 46).

DF concerts always put on touring bands in King Tut's, and let smaller local bands support, give them 100 tickets and expect them to sell loads, so that the touring band can get paid. This is not fair (OSR50).

Part of the dissatisfaction with promoters from audiences can result from the promoter's covert role, and, as the following statements show, promoters often believe that their role is entirely hidden from an audience:-

Your man on the street doesn't – when he goes to a gig – he doesn't know who's promoting it; he doesn't care (anonymised promoter).

I would think the majority – the fourteen year-olds that want to go and see Green Day in the SECC – they don't care who puts it on, as long as the tickets are no more than thirty-two pounds fifty and they can see Green Day (Caldwell 2009).

The online survey, however, showed that a surprising thirty-one per cent of respondents were aware of the identity of the promoter at the last gig they attended, whether by personal contact, email communication (or otherwise) from the promoter, or from branding at the event (the promoter's name on the ticket, for example). As discussed in Chapter Four, the promoter's role within the event itself is necessarily covert, but the perhaps surprisingly high response rate from the survey indicates that audiences are more aware of the promoter than promoters perceive them to be.

However, while promoters may get the blame for a poor show, the converse may also be true, whereby the promoter is blamed for a poor show by the artist. One such example occurred during Guns N' Roses' appearance at Reading Festival in 2010 where the band

appeared fifty-eight minutes late after their allotted start time. The festival's curfew meant that the band was forced to curtail their set even though the curfew was extended by half an hour ('Axl Rose ...' 2010). The crowd could clearly be heard shouting 'Fuck you Reading, fuck you Reading!' albeit the fault appeared to lay squarely with Guns N' Roses.<sup>62</sup> In this way, while audiences may be more aware of the promoter's identity than perhaps promoters understand, audiences are also often unaware of the backstage machinations of live music events, as is further illustrated in the following subsection on the relationship between promoters and venues.

## ***Venues***

The accrual of social capital with venues by external ('independent' or 'artist-affiliated') promoters ensures the following: first, that the venue welcomes the promoter back in the future; second, that the venue assists the promoter in promoting their shows; and third, a personal relationship with the venue can lead to a more favourable hire fee. A venue may terminate its dealings with a promoter, however, if the promoter fails to pay, produces consistently poor shows with poor attendances, or if a promoter misbehaves or acts unprofessionally (Taylor 2010). In this way, who and what is promoted within a locality can be affected: the venue may not take the same risks as an external promoter, for example, and audiences within a locality may miss out on touring artists if the relationship between a venue and an external promoter is conflicted. Relationships between venues and external promoters can be conflicted in other ways, however. For example, a venue sometimes has little control over the way an external promoter operates, just as a promoter often has little or no control over the way that a venue promotes their shows on their behalf (as is discussed further in Chapter Eight). In this sense, two of the most fundamental elements of a live music event – venue and promoter – may sometimes be at odds, even while seemingly with the same aims, namely to attract as large an audience as possible to an event.

Audiences often do not differentiate 'venue' from 'promoter', as shown above, even if the show is externally promoted, which can also cause conflict between promoter and

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<sup>62</sup> Audiences' dissatisfaction with Guns N' Roses' behaviour became apparent a few days later, however, when they were bottled off stage in Dublin after arriving on stage over an hour late (Cochrane 2010).

venue. One example of a poorly promoted external gig occurred at St George's Bristol in October 2009. The event, featuring Trio Fantasia, was allegedly not listed in any local or national newspapers, and neither the agent nor promoter had been in touch with the venue to enquire after ticket sales. While the venue would have preferred to cancel that particular gig due to low attendance, they were unable to at such short notice. Venue staff were concerned that it would be detrimental to their own self-image and I spoke to a number of dissatisfied audience members on the night who were not necessarily aware that the event was externally promoted. Poor relations between venue and promoter can also be exacerbated by external promoters' failure to deal with customer complaints, both during and after the show (Prestwich 2009). As Karen Taylor of Glasgow's Concert Halls illustrates: 'It's not the promoter that's out there getting it in the neck: it's you' (Taylor 2010). In this sense, external promoters should be aware that venues and venue staff are at the frontline of the audience experience and are therefore vital in ensuring loyalty.

The above has therefore shown that the live music ecology can be shaped by the social and business relationships between promoter and artist, agent, audience, and venue, and that live music promoters rely on the development and maintenance of successful relationships with these figures. Promoters' relationships with other promoters are also important, however. Chapter Four showed that the promotion of live music is inherently competitive and the following subsection begins by examining competition between promoters and with the wider leisure industries to show how these, too, can shape the live music ecology.

### ***Other promoters***

As shown in Chapter Four, promoters have highly variable motivations and ideologies which can have direct connotations for who they work with or have relationships with. Hence promoters can be pejorative about the methods others use or the artists being promoted. It was also shown in Chapter Four that as promoters move towards the commercial model, the more they are subject to other people's tastes (Cloonan 2010) and hence market forces. However, authenticity and (sub)cultural capital (Thornton 1995) is highly regarded among certain promoters and they often have a keen sense of another promoter's (sub)cultural status and whether that promoter is 'selling out', or 'selling to

*outsiders'* (ibid., p. 124, emphasis in original). Karen Taylor, for instance, expressed her surprise at the artists that DF Concerts were promoting at Glasgow's Concert Halls:-

DF are promoting The Priests this year – four singing priests – who would have thought it?! ... You wouldn't have thought when Stuart [Clumpas]<sup>63</sup> was at DF or whatever, that they would ever be promoting something so sort of mainstream or middle of the road ... It can be a bit odd who's promoting what at times; it's just not what you might expect ... It's all about the buck, at the end of the day, to them – not all – but I mean that's the job: it's to make money (Taylor 2010).

Resentment between promoters is often as a result of ideological differences, economic or operational squabbles, or where a promoter is perceived as 'unfairly' or 'unethically' gaining economic, social, and/or symbolic capital. Because of their public funding, for example, 'state' promoters are sometimes regarded by 'independent' promoters as having 'a bit of a soft life really, because they're on a salary' (Deadman 2008).

### **Competition with other promoters**

Rivalry can also be fierce among promoters over competition for the 'leisure pound'. If supply and demand are equally high, competition is healthy and allows room for collaboration; if supply is high but demand is low, conversely, market saturation and unhealthy competition can occur; hence 'underhand tactics' may come into play between competing promoters. For example, one Glasgow-based ex-promoter, now agent, told me of a competitor who bad-mouthed her to agents and artists in order to attempt to diminish her credibility with such figures:-

[The competitor] would be like, 'They don't even pay their public liability insurance' although we did, or 'They're not proper promoters', or 'One of them's got another job', or 'It's just a hobby', or 'You can't trust them with that size of show; they don't know what they're doing; they don't have the money to pay if it all goes tits up' (Angus 2009).

Live music promotion can therefore be positive or negative: promoters either positively promote their own events, or seek to wreck another promoter's event in order that their own is more successful. The same ex-promoter told me of the near disaster that occurred

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<sup>63</sup> DF was started by Stuart Clumpas in 1982 in Dundee as Dance Factory, which organised a series of club nights in the city centre venue, Fat Sams (Cloonan and Frith 2010).

when their chosen 'unusual' and unlicensed venue had to be changed an hour and a half before the doors were due to open 'because a rival promoter grassed us in' to the authorities (ibid.). In this example, the rival promoter was deliberately intending to harm Angus' event in order to decrease the number of competitors for their own event. In my own experience, a certain successful nightclub in Sheffield was renowned for removing other promoters' posters around the city, an experience common to many promoters, as Glasgow-based promoter Pete MacCalman explained:-

There's one promoter in Glasgow that for a while employed someone to take down other promoters' posters. The club scene in Glasgow, particularly, holds no respect for the live scene really, and just plasters over your work. So if everyone has the same attitude to get presence, you just take people's posters down and put yours up ... Everybody's fighting for the same thing, basically; everybody's fighting for the same bit of turf ... I mean, a lot of [promoters in] Glasgow do it very much as a business as well; everyone's earning money out of it and a living, essentially, out of it. So it makes everything a bit more kind of cut-throat and ruthless (MacCalman 2009).

Alternatively, competition fails to be a free and healthy process when apparent competitors are essentially fragments of a corporate whole. Previously informal competitive business relationships are now increasingly codified as a result of the gradual consolidation of the live music industries in the UK, as is discussed shortly.

### **Competition from outside the live music sector**

Promoters do not simply compete with other live music promoters, however. As shown in Chapter Four, they are also competing against other sectors of the leisure industries for consumers' discretionary spend or 'leisure pound'. Graeme Howell, Director of Bristol's Colston Hall, explained that:-

When you work in the leisure industry, your competition is incredibly diverse, so we need to persuade people to part with money that they might otherwise spend on a *meal* ... So it's about trying to communicate the value (2010, emphasis in original).

When asked how he 'communicates the value' of live music, Howell highlighted the need for promoters and venues to offer a multi-faceted experience that is more than simply a 'gig', with customers able 'to eat good food, drink good coffee, get beer ... It's about as best as you can guaranteeing a good time' (ibid.). By increasing their offer to include

products not previously associated with live music, the diversification of venues illustrates how promoters and venues are cannily co-opting other parts of the leisure market in order to compete with markets outside their original remit. The flipside of this is that other markets then utilise music to bring in customers to *their* businesses, hence the inclusion of live music artists at events such as Formula 1 racing's 'F1 Rocks' gigs ('Formula 1 ...' 2010), for example, or mobile phone company O<sub>2</sub>'s involvement with music venues (Braiden 2008). In this way, there is a blending and merging of markets and industries in the twenty-first century, many of which perhaps cynically see music as a means of attracting new customers.

Finally, promoters must also compete against leisure activities that take place within the home. Ken Green, Secretary of the South Yorkshire Working Men's Club and Institute Union (WMCIU), bemoaned the collapse of club memberships, blaming it partly on what he perceives as a rise in people staying in and using TV or home entertainment systems: 'They can sit there with a can of lager from Tesco. They've got out of the habit of going out' (Green 2009). Penny Blackham, ex-live events manager at the University of Sheffield's Union of Students, agrees with Green. She stated that being at home is a 'huge competitor' because, twenty years ago, 'if you wanted to drink, sing and dance, play in bands, or talk to your friends, you had to go *out*', whereas gaming machines, state of the art hi-fi equipment, and 'supermarket drinking' mean that such activities can now take place in the home (Blackham 2010, emphasis in original). In this way, promoters must compete locally, nationally and internationally, both within and without the live music sector. Promoters therefore deal with increasingly free market economic infrastructures, as was explored in the previous chapter.

## **Formal and informal networks within the live music sector**

While the above shows that competition exists between promoters, and between promoters and the wider leisure industries, the promotion of live music is also surprisingly collaborative. Hence the second main section of Chapter Six shows that, paradoxically, promoters also have to develop and maintain significant relationships with their competitors via formal and informal networks. The final part of the chapter then shows how the changing structures within the wider live music industries are affecting the ecology at a local level.

Formal and informal networks between promoters exist at the three levels defined by Webb in his 2007 work on the networked worlds of popular music. These are firstly, the local milieu; secondly, Bourdieu's 'fields of cultural production' – in this case, the live music industries; and thirdly, the relationships that the first two levels have with other milieux within local, national, and global culture, economy and politics (Webb 2007). However, it is worth noting that, as live music is ultimately local music, the various strands within Webb's matrix can overlap as the field of cultural production may well also be local.

At a local level, then, examples of formal networks between core individuals and organisations include Sheffield's CIQA's 'Cultural Exchange' and Creative Boom, and the Bristol Music Foundation. Informal networks exist both as a result of industrial clusters that compete but also co-operate (Banks *et al* 2000) – as with the case of Sheffield's Stag Works or Glasgow's Hidden Lanes – and also as a result of friendship groups, chance encounters and/or geographical proximity. In Sheffield, for instance, when I was flyering for Headcharge on the University of Sheffield concourse, this was a chance not only to distribute publicity material but also to catch up on the latest gossip and plans of other promoters who were also flyering there.

Within the field of cultural production – the live music industries – formal networks include the National Arenas Association – of which Sheffield's and Glasgow's arenas are both members – and the Concert Promoters Association, to which DF Concerts, SJM, and Metropolis Music belong (which promote extensively in Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol, respectively). Formalised networking opportunities at local, national and international levels are also available at a variety of conferences, such as the Festival Awards, Live UK Summit, ILMC (International Live Music Conference), the Association of British Orchestras annual conference, and Celtic Connections' Showcase Scotland and Scotland on Tour. Informal networks include loose affiliations with promoters in other cities to swap bookings, such as the Gig Cartel (Wilson 2008), but informal networks also form due to the nature of the live music industries. Promoters may work for different companies during their career but the people and the networks rather than the company remain the same (Dickins 2009). As Dave McGeachan explained:-

We [promoters] phone each other and I would say that most of us are friends. Well, most or *all* of us are really friends. We're all doing the same job, and there's not really *many* of us, when you actually see the size of the country (McGeachan 2010).

Promoters may also (surreptitiously) consult with each other about artists' fees to ensure that they are not being ripped off by an agent (Dodds 2010).

At the national and international level, formal networks may include parliamentary lobbying groups such as the Committee of Registered Clubs' Associations (CORCA) to which the WMCIU belongs, and international networks such as the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA).<sup>64</sup> Informal networks often revolve around touring and festivals; for example a friend in another city putting a band in touch with a local promoter, or an informal 'twinning' of two cities, such as Sheffield and Catalonian Manresa via their shared folk music and traditions and attendance at the other city's festivals (Bates 2009).

At all levels of the matrix, formal and informal networks rely, to an extent, on formal and informal 'codes of conduct'. For example, formal agreements may be in place among promoters – particularly 'state' promoters – to avoid clashes or saturation.

Representatives from Scottish Opera, for instance, meet with representatives from the other national opera companies twice a year to compare and contrast schedules, a meeting originally brokered by Arts Council England but now managed by the opera companies themselves (Reedijk 2009). Informal codes of conduct also exist, whereby promoters will not generally try to 'steal' another's acts (Competition Commission 2010b, p. F7), or will not deliberately attempt to negatively affect another promoter's event by promoting a similar event on the same night. In the case of Headcharge in Sheffield, the 'unwritten rule' was that free party organisers would not put on a party on the last Friday of the month as this was Headcharge's regular slot; the organisers understood that the 'scene' depended on co-operation. In this way, those within the live music sector

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<sup>64</sup> A new UK Live Music Group was formed in May 2011, consisting of members such as the Concert Promoters Association, the Association of Independent Festivals, and the Agents Association (Masson 2011b). Representatives from the group are on the board of UK Music, the parliamentary lobbying group, and the Group is chaired by Live Nation's Paul Latham. The Group has been formed over concerns about the proposed rise in the PRS tariff, but the Group will also use UK Music to lobby on issues over visas and licensing regulations (ibid.).

necessarily understand the need for a degree of collaboration in a competitive environment under certain market forces.

### ***The changing structures within the live music industries***

However, while such formal and informal networks have long been a part of the live music sector in the UK, globalisation in the form of consolidation and takeovers by outside interests such as Live Nation is a twenty-first century phenomenon, and is fundamentally altering the structures within the live music industries. The next subsection now examines some of the effects of this to argue that these developments are essentially changing – albeit covertly – the local live music ecology. It first sets out the current structures within the live music industries in the UK (as of Spring 2011), and then discusses the impact of this on local ecologies.

Earlier models of promotion saw ‘local’ promoters promote locally and regionally, while national tours were spread among them; promoters were not necessarily venue owners but would often independently hire venues for the show. Now, however, large-scale promoters such as Live Nation may buy the rights to an entire national or world tour, and may also own the venue, the booking agent, and the artist’s management (Charles 2004). As one promoter explained:-

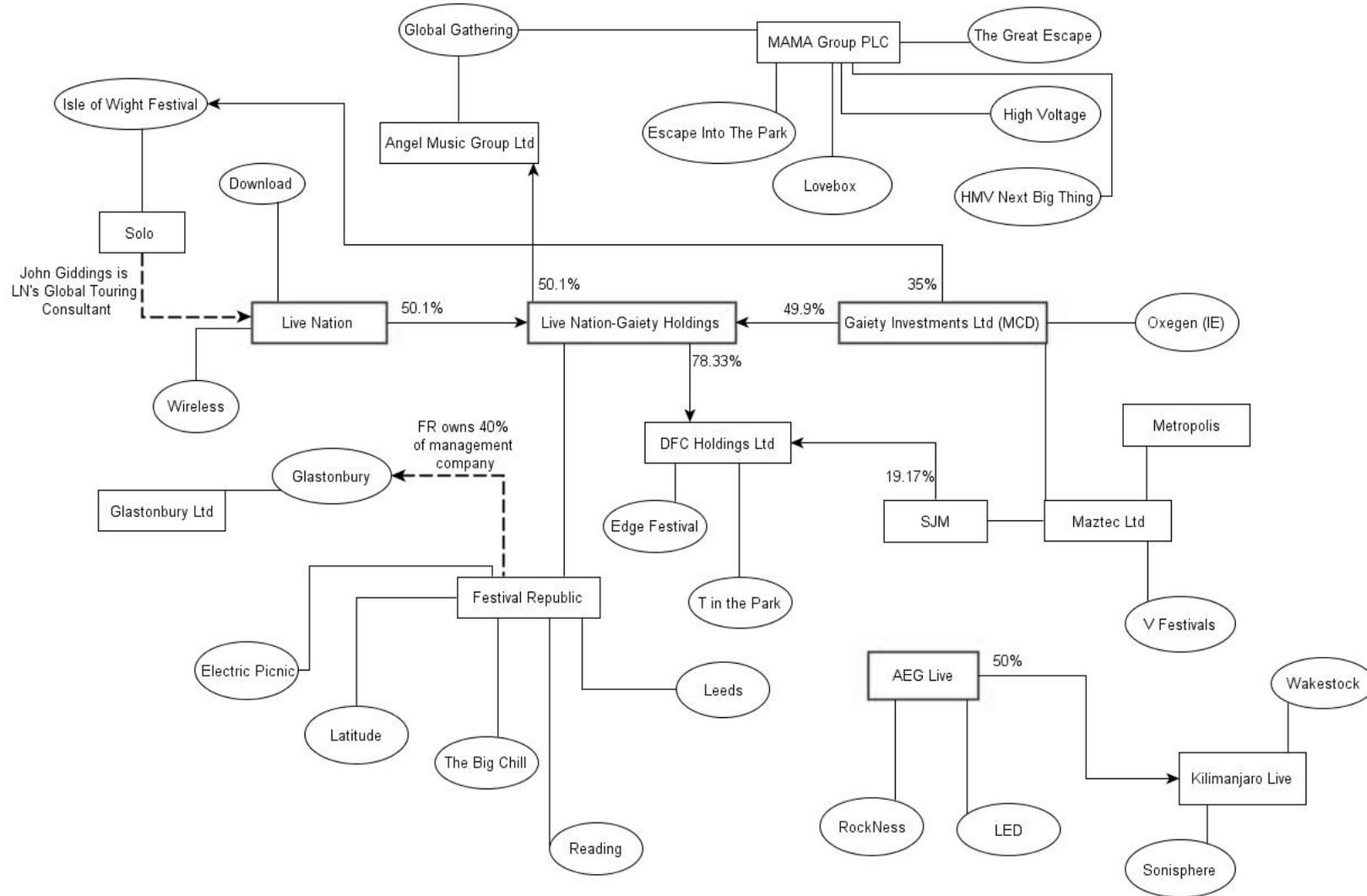
It’s basically distributing the money within [Live Nation] ... The management of Madonna [and] the agent that books Madonna is owned by Live Nation. They book Madonna into Live Nation owned venues, they pay Live Nation owned companies to do the advertising and promotion for it, so all that money is just going round and round in a circle in Live Nation; they’re not actually paying anyone else ... From booking to transport to venue to promotion to marketing, merchandise; everything is Live Nation. So it all just goes round and round, and it’s getting bigger and bigger (anonymised).

Rather than calling twenty-five promoters for twenty-five different dates on a tour, agents now need only call one (Charles 2004, p. 154).

To offer a brief background to Live Nation, American company SFX Entertainment began acquiring British companies in 1999, namely the Apollo Leisure Group, Midland Concert Promotions, and the Barry Clayman Corporation, which made SFX ‘one of the biggest players in the British live music landscape virtually overnight’ (Frith *et al* 2010, p. 9). In

2000, SFX was bought by multi-national corporation Clear Channel, which then set up a live music focused spin-off, Live Nation, in 2005 – now the largest concert promoter in the world – which merged with the largest ticket agency in the world, Ticketmaster, in 2010. Live Nation and Irish promoter MCD/Gaiety Investments Ltd set up the jointly controlled Live Nation-Gaiety Holdings in 2008, which has also been pursuing a policy of consolidation within the UK live music industries. To illustrate this, Figure 6-1 shows how Live Nation, Gaiety Investments, and Live Nation-Gaiety Holdings were involved in many of the major festivals and venues in the UK in 2010 (from Brennan and Webster 2010):-

**Figure 6-1: UK major festival ownership 2010**



Live Nation-Gaiety Holdings (LN-Gaiety) can clearly be seen at the centre of the web of major UK festivals in this diagram. Hence LN-Gaiety majority-owns Glasgow-based DFC Holdings, which runs both T in the Park and owns and manages King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. LN-Gaiety is also linked to Glastonbury Festival via its ownership of Festival Republic, which runs Reading, Leeds and Latitude. It should also be pointed out that LN-Gaiety also owns shares in the Academy Music Group – along with regional/national promoters Metropolis and SJM – which owns and manages the O<sub>2</sub> Academies across the UK, including those in Glasgow, Sheffield, Bristol, Oxford and Birmingham (Competition Commission 2010b, p. D1). The second largest promotional company in the world, AEG Live, is also influential in the UK's live music industries, with its involvement with festivals such as Sonisphere and Rockness, and its ownership of the O<sub>2</sub> concert arena in London and, more recently, taking over the booking of University of London's student union (Masson 2011a).

A key figure in this development appears to have been Denis Desmond of MCD/Gaiety Investments, described by agent John Giddings as someone who 'believes in having a finger in a lot of pies; he likes control' (Giddings 2010). Giddings went on to say that Desmond is a very good adjudicator between different people's opinions, and it is suggested here that Desmond has become the 'promoters' promoter', mediating between (and funding) many of the other major promoters in the UK and Ireland.<sup>65</sup> As Giddings explained, Desmond is a 'sleeping partner' in Giddings' own Isle of Wight festival (*ibid.*), but is also in business with SJM, Metropolis, and Live Nation, as well as being instrumental in setting up Scotland's T in the Park (Dingwall 2009). In this way, Desmond has become one of the most powerful figures in the UK live music industries, despite being based in Ireland. The discussion now turns to the potential impact of the above on local live music ecologies to illustrate how promoters shape such an ecology.

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<sup>65</sup> It is also worth pointing out that Desmond is not restricted to live music promotion, but also has a holding in the Abrakebabra fast-food chain (which owns the Gourmet Burger Kitchen chain, Yo! Sushi and the Bagel Factory), as well as a thirty-three per cent stake in Ireland's Observe Outside Broadcast ('Denis Desmond, MCD' 2010).

### **Local knowledge/identity**

With the growth of multi-national promotional companies such as Live Nation, some of the 'local capital' – and, arguably, local identity – has been lost as local promoters and venues cannot compete with the money and power of companies such as Live Nation. Larger promoters are impinging on smaller promoters' territory, or taking artists away from promoters who have spent time and money building loyalty with that artist (Basford 2009). This can be problematic for artists, audiences and promoters for two reasons. Firstly, local club-level promoters arguably do a better job in smaller venues than national arena-level promoters because they have time to dedicate to it and are more used to working at a smaller scale. Secondly, it makes it difficult for smaller local promoters to break through the 'glass ceiling' because the national promoters are involved at an early stage and therefore monopolise the artists when they achieve success (Dodds 2010). This suggests that if local promoters look to expand their enterprises, they will eventually either come directly into competition with a corporate organisation – a tough proposition – or simply become co-opted into the corporate process. Either way a corporate organisation will effectively have the opportunity to control the market at a lower level than previously.

While many local commercial and non-commercial promoters I interviewed did not feel that Live Nation and other large-scale promoters were directly impacting on their business, others explained that national promoters were now also promoting smaller shows and are involved at many levels of live music events. However, as one promoter pointed out in reference to companies such as Live Nation or DF Concerts, it is important for smaller promoters to have such competition as 'It gives everybody something to fight against!' (Angus 2009).

### **Codification of informal networks**

The second point to be made is that the codification of previously informal business relationships means that large corporations such as Live Nation and Gaiety Investments now have a strong hold over the market. To use the example of the UK festival market, what this means in practice is that, because the larger corporations have access to knowledge about which artists are being bid for by other festivals, say, this information can be passed on in order that another festival within their fold does not bid for the same

artist (Dodds 2010). By influencing the market in this way, the holding companies ensure that they get the best deals from the agents for the artists required. Indeed, the rise of national and global corporate promoters led one promoter to describe the live music industry to me, off the record, at a live music industry conference in 2008 as 'a stitch-up' whereby all the big companies own shares in the other big companies, creating a monopoly. He stated that the whole industry is run by four or five people and was amazed that the Competition Commission allowed this to happen. What is of concern is the potential impact on independent festivals and local promoters that are not part of this consolidated network, and the subsequent potential impact on the musical variety of the UK's cities.

### **Market share**

The third point to be made is that the trend towards consolidation in the twenty-first century means that companies such as Live Nation and AEG Live are particularly focused on increasing their market share and thus buying up pre-existing relationships within the live music sector (Latham 2009). As Pete MacCalman (2009) alleged, 'the hope that [Live Nation] have is that they will eventually put other companies out of business, other people out of business, so that they can narrow down Glasgow and control it. That's just corporate thought: it's about control at any cost'. However, the signs are that this is not happening as yet in the way that MacCalman predicted. For example, while Live Nation bought the rights to promote Coldplay's entire 2009 world tour, they kept the UK's 'traditional' promoters involved, such as Metropolis and SJM. These promoters were then 'forced' into a co-promotion with Live Nation, whereby one promoter was responsible for ticketing and marketing, and the other for production and running the show itself (Dodds 2010). Hence the long-term business relationships between artist, agent and promoter were at least still present, albeit greatly altered.

While it does not matter, perhaps, who is promoting a national tour from the point of view of the audience or even the artist, it is worth examining the case of Nottingham as an example of the potential impact of small-scale consolidation on a local live music ecology. The major city centre venues in Nottingham are all owned by the independently-owned DHP Group; the city has no O<sub>2</sub> Academy although promoters such as AEG Live use the council-run Nottingham Royal Centre for promoting concerts. DHP also operates its

own ticketing agency, promotes in venues other than its own, and has its own management and booking agency, hence DHP-managed bands are heavily promoted within all DHP venues. The result is that it can be very difficult for new promoters and artists to access the venues and the city's live music scene is, arguably, somewhat stifled as a result (LeftLion 2007; NottsUnsigned 2010).

### **Competition within the national and international arenas**

The fourth point to be made is that involvement with companies such as Live Nation can also bring advantages which may in turn benefit the local ecology. For example, companies now within the Live Nation fold are able to be more competitive within both the national and international live music industries, hence artists may now tour to localities they previously missed out, meaning perhaps greater choice for audiences. DF Concerts, for example, was able to promote Bruce Springsteen in 2009 in his first Scottish tour since 1981, arguably due to Live Nation's influence and financial backing (Cloonan and Frith 2010). Furthermore, as the following production manager for DF Concerts explained:-

[Involvement with Live Nation] means that we're now in a strong position with suppliers, and you know, if you're looking at [non-Live Nation] agents trying to bump up the price of a tour, you can turn round and go, 'Well, actually, no; across the UK as Live Nation we say no' (Caldwell 2009).

Likewise, being under the Live Nation 'umbrella' gives companies greater bargaining position with regards to prime rate legal and insurance cover (ibid.). On the other hand, Live Nation's policy for its horizontally and vertically integrated companies to work with 'Live Nation approved' suppliers can mean damaging long-term relationships between the subsidiary and its original suppliers; this can lead to higher costs which will inevitably be passed on to the consumer.

### **Professionalism**

Finally, the professionalisation of the live music industries theoretically guarantees a level of competence when dealing with companies such as Live Nation or the Academy Music Group for artists, audiences, and other promoters. The student union circuit has now ostensibly been replaced with the O<sub>2</sub> Academy network, which on the one hand means a

certain homogenisation of artists playing around the country, but also ensures a corporatised standard of professionalism in terms of employees, equipment, venue size and administration. As one Glasgow-based promoter who occasionally works with Live Nation explained: 'I'd rather work with Live Nation than with some of the gangsters that work in Glasgow ... I mean, Live Nation, if you fall out, what's the worst they can do? I don't pay them or they don't pay me. That's *it*, isn't it?' (MacCalman 2009, emphasis in original).

On a broader scale, the increasing global consolidation of the live music sector has already started to affect the business model elsewhere. In the States, for instance, promoter John Scher accused Live Nation of having 'broken' the live music business model because of its focus on 'market share and not profitability' (quoted in Seabrook 2009). Scher explained that the promoter's margins have always been slim, which means that he has to monitor every detail of an event 'including how much ice the barmen put in the glasses' (ibid.). However, with Live Nation's determination to own the largest market share, it paid acts over the going rate, which pushed up artist fees across the board because Live Nation was offering inflated guarantees to sign up with the company. As Scher stated, what has happened is that 'Live Nation can't make money. So they go to Ticketmaster and say, "We need a bigger piece of the service charges". So Ticketmaster raises its service charges. And then what happens? The public gets fed up' (ibid.). While this has perhaps yet to happen in the UK (as of 2011) to the extent that it has in the United States, some promoters are concerned that the gradual creep into the live music sector in the UK by multi-national corporations such as Live Nation and AEG Live could be disadvantageous.

## Summary

This chapter has shown how the promoter shapes the live music ecology by exploring the vital networks and relationships a promoter must develop and maintain in order to promote their events successfully. It has been ascertained that promoters need to treat artists well if they are to return and play for them again, and it was seen that the promoter's handling of the artist's rider forms a vital part of this relationship. The promoter's connection to the artist is often mediated via an agent, however (who, in turn, will often be dealing with the artist's manager), and the relationship between

promoter and agent (and tour manager) is arguably one of the most important that a promoter needs to maintain, dependent on the status of both artist and promoter. While some promoters have a close, even personal, relationship with their audiences, the work of promoters is often necessarily covert, only becoming overt when something goes awry. For this reason, the relationship between the promoter and the audience may be mediated via the venue, venue staff and/or ticket agent. What was perhaps most surprising in the research were the relationships promoters have with other promoters, whether through personal friendships or via formal and informal networks. In this way, the promotion of live music is somewhat paradoxical: it is inherently competitive and yet perhaps surprisingly collaborative.

This chapter has also shown how the changing structures within the live music industries can potentially impact on the local live music ecology. However, each local ecology is unique and the impact of the national and multi-national promoters on each locality will inevitably be different. Nevertheless, a 'healthy' local live music ecology requires a balance of promoters and venues. As has been noted elsewhere, this is why 'top-down' organisations such as Live Nation are potentially problematic: if the balance between promoters, venues and ownership leans too far in one direction, then 'the whole ecology is endangered' (Brennan and Webster 2011, p. 18). For the time being, however, the consolidation of the live music industries continues, and leads to the conclusion that corporations such as Live Nation *et al*, while disliked in some camps, will remain an important part of the UK's live music sector – and indeed, live music far beyond the UK – for the foreseeable future and hence will continue to impact on the local live music ecology.

To conclude this chapter, then, promoters need to cultivate relationships with a wide variety of parties with conflicting interests. In this way, the promoter's role is to broker such interests against their own need to make a profit (or avoid a loss). If artists want higher fees and audiences desire lower ticket prices, for example, the promoter's role is to mediate between the two while still being able to fulfil their own needs. In a sense, then, the promoter's role is to persuade each party that the transaction between them is fair – that the venue hire is the right price, that the artist fee is fair, and that the ticket price for the audience is reasonable for the event on offer and offers value for money. Even for an event where there is no fee as such (folk sessions in a pub, for example),

other factors need to be communicated to the various parties by the promoter (for example, that beer prices and travel costs will not be too expensive). However, as was seen from the above material, promoters do not always seek such balance and part of the reason for the sometimes dim view of promoters taken by some is when they put their profits above the other factors within the event.

Now that promoters have been defined and the contexts within which they operate have been explored, the final part of the thesis examines what they do in more depth in each of the planning, publicity and production stages. It is argued that the decisions that promoters make are vital for the success of the event, and hence for the experience for all participants.

# Part Three: Chapter Seven: Planning the live music event

## Introduction

The second part of the thesis considered the external constraints and relationships a promoter necessarily negotiates and develops within the live music ecology; it showed that a tension often exists between promoters and the parameters set by others. The third and final part of the thesis examines the parameters set by the promoter. Previous chapters showed that the promoter acts as a mediator between a number of parties within and outside the event. This part of the thesis shows *how* the promoter mediates such relationships in planning, publicising and producing their events across three chapters. It argues that the promoter's role is highly complex and involves balancing a number of conflicting interests against their own. Chapter Seven therefore deals with the role of the promoter in planning the live music event, and does so in two main sections. The first section conceptualises the live music event and establishes the theoretical models that underpin the final part of the thesis. The second section explores in detail the means by which the promoter plans for a successful event.

## Conceptualising the live music event

While Frith (2008a) has broadly conceptualised the live music event, as addressed in the introduction to this thesis, the following section examines more closely the various elements of the event which are particularly relevant to the promoter, namely the type of event and how this relates to participant behaviour. It sets out a typology of live music events that is drawn on throughout the final part of this thesis.

### *A typology of live music events*

Finnegan writes that 'It would be going too far ... to try to establish a definitive typology of performance models' due to the overlap between the performance models of the different musical worlds (2007, p. 151). However, to understand how a promoter plans the live music event, an understanding of the performance types and associated conventions of live music events is a useful tool. There are a number of ways in which

such a model could be constructed. For example, live music events could be analysed by musical genre, as with Purcell and Graham's (2005) typology of Toronto nightclubs, based on genre but also approximating socio-demographics, subcultural style, functional distinctions, and alcohol and drug usage. However, as they established ten different types of events for nightclubs alone, a typology of live music events based on genre would be both unwieldy and impractical.

Instead, the typology presented here, based on participant observation at the case study venues and a lifetime of concert going, returns to the idea that a live music event is a social experience that involves simultaneous production and consumption (Cohen 1991, pp. 96-101). It is therefore possible to typologise four types of event by using an analysis of producer-consumer interaction. In the literature review, it was suggested that Turino's typology of live music events (2008) could instead be viewed as a continuum related to Frith's (1996) art/folk/pop discourses and that it could be expanded with the addition of two further categories: 'participatory presentational' and 'presentational participatory'. Musically, these two types combine the tropes identified by Turino in presentational and participatory events, but constantly shift between the two; from short, open, repeated forms to more complex variations, for example.

The first type of live music event suggested here is therefore 'presentational', as defined by Turino, whereby the attendees are consumers with little or no contribution to the production of the music or the spectacle on stage; a symphony concert, for example. Akin to the Western classical concert tradition, the attendees will usually remain silent throughout the duration of the music performance. The second type is 'participatory presentational' – a rock gig, for example – whereby the consumers and the producers influence each other in a 'continuous feedback loop' (Cohen 1991, p. 96) but where the producer is still the focus. There will generally be a greater level of audience participation, both physically and verbally. Performers often highlight the participatory sections through actions such as holding a microphone out to the audience or initiating call and response patterns. The third type is 'presentational participatory' – a nightclub, for example – wherein the type of participation is usually (but not always) dancing, and where the producer, often in the form of a DJ or dance band, is a 'catalyst' for the 'reaction between the music and the crowd' (Haslam 1998, p. 160) but is less of a focus than the consumers themselves. There are elements of presentation within the event, such as live hip hop

MCs in a DJ booth, but the focus will be primarily on the audience. The fourth type is 'participatory', as defined by Turino, where there is little or no separation between consumers and producers, such as at a folk session.<sup>66</sup> These types can be expressed in diagrammatic form, as shown in Figure 7-1:-

**Figure 7-1: A typology of live music events**



The caveats are that, as Finnegan states, there may be considerable overlap between these four types, and the type of event may change in nature throughout its duration, particularly towards the participatory types. However, these four types are drawn on throughout the final part of the thesis to illustrate how the promoter necessarily understands the type of event they are promoting.

### ***Conceptualising participant behaviour within the live music event***

Now that the various types of live music event have been established, the next task is to understand how these relate to participant behaviour. Wall and Dubber (2010, p. 161) state that the ways in which music is 'consumed, celebrated, collected, examined and enjoyed' is largely 'inscribed' by dominant practices among the recorded and live music industries. Participants therefore bring their own expectations of behaviour and conventions to live music events, based both on the dominant practices within the type of event and their previous experiences (see Frith 1996, p. 205). However, as Wall and Dubber point out, what is perhaps more interesting are the ways in which these

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<sup>66</sup> Festival-type events are not a separate category but rather contain a multitude of different types occurring at any one time. However, there are obvious differences between a festival and a concert, namely that, in the case of camping festivals, the participants (artists, audience, crew) form a transient community that sleeps, eats, works, and plays in one temporary site.

behaviours differ from one niche music to another, particularly within the world of popular music (2010, p. 161).

To understand this, drawing on Thompson's 2007 work on factors affecting audiences' enjoyment of concert events, factors affecting participant behaviour could be divided into 'anticipated behaviour' and 'actual behaviour'. Anticipated behaviour depends on an individual's previous experience of live music events, whereas actual behaviour is based on 'background modifiers' and 'dynamic modifiers'; the former being variables that remain constant during performance (for example, the spatial environment such as whether the venue is seated or standing), the latter being variables subject to change during a performance (the behaviour of other audience members, for instance). Human communication can include spoken, sung, instrumental, visual, auditory, pictorial, graphic, material, gestural, proxemic, and kinesic (Finnegan 2003, p. 1153), and background and dynamic modifiers of behaviour contain a variety or combination of each type. The following subsection examines participants' anticipated behaviour while actual behaviour is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Nine.

### **Anticipated behaviour**

The development of one's anticipated behaviour within certain identities can be examined using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of the development of identity (cited in Lamont 2002, p. 43). Participants learn through the complex interplay of 'microsystems', 'mesosystems', 'exosystems', and 'macrosystems' (ibid.). In other words, the development of a person's identity and the behaviours associated with that identity in any given situation is formed through direct contact with social processes that negotiate meaning (microsystems), such as schooling or parents, and the relationships between these (mesosystems). These mesosystems are in turn affected by contexts in which the person has no direct control or influence, such as government or the media (exosystems), which in turn are affected by the wider beliefs of the society, or macrosystems (ibid.). A person's identity is therefore formed as a result of the complex interplay of these systems and is their 'place in a collaborative awareness of the world and what to do in it' (Trevathan 2002, p. 34). Anticipated behaviour at a live music event is therefore based on the accumulation of awareness learned from a person's prior experiences of negotiating the complex systems they operate within.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is now explored with examples from the case study venues, to illustrate that anticipated behaviour is both influenced by and constructed within Frith's musical discourses (1996) and the event types established above. Some attendees of 'presentational' classical concerts at St George's Bristol, for example, had attended music events with their parents as children and had learned how to behave from them. One seventy-nine-year-old attendee stated that when he was young and taken to concerts by his parents, he was too nervous to make any noise whatsoever as he was scared of what his father might do if he did; his anticipated behaviour now is as a result of this early exposure to classical music concerts (Smith 2009). 'Participatory' 'folk' events, on the other hand, focus on community and participation, therefore behaviour is learned from others rather than necessarily from parents, and participants learn from 'just doing'. Other participants may encourage 'correct' behaviour via positive feedback (smiling, for example) or negative feedback: 'giving you a look' if your behaviour is incorrect, for example (Roberts 2009). At 'pop' events such as 'presentational participatory' nightclubs or 'participatory presentational' gigs, one learns behaviour from one's peers, often at a young age.

Participants often accredit their understanding of social rules and norms appropriate to the event in question to 'common sense', instinct, or an understanding that 'dem's the rules' (Siddorn 2009), or 'how do you know what to do in *any* situation?' (Paterson 2009, emphasis in original). Especially noticeable among women at King Tut's was the idea that people know the kind of behaviour that annoys *them* and therefore will not do anything that would annoy other people. Audience members also appear to be aware that certain venues, local audiences or musical genres had certain behaviours linked to them. One King Tut's attendee, for example, when asked about the Glasgow audience, stated that he was aware of the reputation of Glasgow crowds for 'wild behaviour' and being the 'best crowd in the country' (McLeary 2009); a self-perpetuating myth, perhaps, but one that then impacts on the participants' behaviour.

## **Genre**

To focus on genre, live music events play a primary role in the construction and perpetuation of music genres (see Paleo and Wijnberg 2006; Holt 2007) and it is argued that, by association, so too do promoters. To understand this further, Turino offers the

concept of 'genre frames' or 'sets of shared values among the fans of a given genre' in which certain musical and social behaviours are expected by those fans (2008, p. 15). Promoters are necessarily acutely aware of such genre frames, as regards the planning of the event (which venue to use to suit the genre and audience); the publicising of the event (how to sell the artist or event to the audience within the genre frame); and the production of the event (what the artist and audience will expect within that genre frame and how to manage both their expectations and behaviour). Other issues around genre are returned to in this and subsequent chapters.

Genre frames may also be linked to particular geographical and temporal locations but participant observation showed that even in the same venue and at similar times, participants display many different types of behaviour, hence as King Tut's Sam Francis explained, 'every genre has got its sort of different breed of fan' (2009). For example, at King Tut's, one night the audience were 'moshing'<sup>67</sup> to Scottish metal act, Sucioperro – a 'participatory presentational' event – whereas a week later for Faroese singer-songwriter, Teitur, the audience stood and listened in respectful silence – a 'presentational' event. Similarly, at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, one night the audience sat quietly and listened to a Sibelius symphony, and a few nights later were up on their feet, dancing and singing along to The Bootleg Beatles. The audiences were demographically and generically different for each event, but what is of interest is how they understood how to behave differently *within the same venues*. It is argued that, while the music is obviously a major factor, the promoter's decisions in establishing the 'parameters of possible participation' also affect this understanding of participant behaviour. In this way, anticipated behaviour is learned and interpreted from a variety of influences before the event itself while actual behaviour is partly affected by the promoter. The second half of this chapter now examines how this happens in practice.

## **Planning the live music event**

The broad typology of live music events posited above is useful for promoters at a general level, but in order to most effectively make decisions in the planning stage, a more nuanced taxonomy of factors within an event is necessary. Paleo and Wijnberg (2006)

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<sup>67</sup> For a comprehensive overview of 'moshing', see both Ambrose (2001) and Desrosiers (2002).

offer a taxonomy of popular music festivals, based on the economic functions of these 'aural goods', which include the character, purpose and innovativeness of the event. In their work on event management, Brown and James define five design principles when designing an event: scale, shape, focus, timing, and build (2004, pp. 60-1), while Getz identifies the following four general categories: setting, theme and programme design, services, and consumables (2007, p. 212).

To add to Paleo and Wijnberg's economically-based taxonomy and taking into account Brown and James' and Getz's managerially-focused categories, the remainder of the chapter uses a socio-cultural perspective to examine the multifarious decisions that live music promoters consider in the planning stage, in order to maximise success and profitability. Such decisions are based on promoters' experiential and empirical knowledge (Williamson, Cloonan and Frith, in press) and hence their evaluation of the performative and behavioural expectations of both artist and audience, around which promoters necessarily make both assumptions and compromises. As Alex Reedijk, General Director of Scottish Opera, explained: 'I'm never ever ever ever gonna please all of you [the audience]. The *best* I can do is please most of you most of the time' (Reedijk 2009, emphasis in original). However, promoters generally agree that if the event has been planned and assembled correctly beforehand, the potential for an event's success increases: 'If you put all the right ingredients there, then you maximise the opportunity for everybody to have a good time, and that's probably mostly done before the event in a way' (Deadman 2008). Thus it is argued that the promoter's decisions in the planning stage are vital for the success of the event, and hence the participant experience.

The rest of the chapter therefore examines in detail the 'ingredients' that the promoter puts together to match artist to venue to audience. To do so, the second half of the chapter is divided into five subsections, focusing on planning a unique experience, planning an optimum environment, community of participants and participant structure, and finally, planning for profitability.<sup>68</sup> It is argued that all promoters, whether a session host in a folk pub, a DIY band promoting their own gigs, a club promoter, a symphony orchestra, or a large-scale festival organiser, must take these decisions to some extent or

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<sup>68</sup> It should be pointed out that while Part Three offers an approximately chronological view of what promoters do, in reality, the promoter's decisions may not be so neatly sequential.

another.<sup>69</sup> As in previous chapters, the promoter's role is to mediate between a number of parties with sometimes conflicting interests, and their role is variable and may be mediated via secondary intermediaries.

### ***Planning a unique experience***

As set out in Chapter Two, live music events are temporally and spatially, socially, musically and emotionally distinct. In order to establish a unique event, then, promoters need to plan the musical programme, including choice of artist and musical genre, and consider elements relating to the temporality of the event. The following subsections therefore examine each element in more depth.

#### **Musical programme**

The choice as to musical programme and/or choice of artist illustrates the 'artistic direction' aspect of the promoter's role and is affected by the type of event, the promotional model used, and the promoter type as set out in Chapter Two. Artists may be (proactively) chosen by the promoter, or (reactively) offered to them by an agent (or similar figure).<sup>70</sup> For an event (as opposed to a particular artist), the promoter may choose the artist best suited to their event, or the best programme for their organisation. A promoter using the 'artist-affiliated' model – the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (SSO), for example – is bound to that particular artist, although the choice of musical programme and/or guest artists also needs to be planned for. Promoters using the 'venue' model need to choose artists appropriate for that venue. An 'enthusiast' promoter is more likely to choose which artist to promote based on personal taste than an 'employee' or 'entrepreneur' promoter (Cloonan 2010). A 'commercial' promoter necessarily has a rational approach to promotion, namely, 'Will this act make me money?' As discussed in Chapter Four, live music promoters are necessarily risk-takers; they gamble on whether there is an audience for their chosen artist or event.

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<sup>69</sup> However, for an event that takes place in the same venue at regular intervals, these decisions would need to have been made for the first event and regularly re-evaluated thereafter.

<sup>70</sup> For 'participatory' events, the 'choice' is more democratic as the focus is on participation rather than selection, although a session host at a folk event will often have a loose role in choosing who plays next.

Live music promoters programme single events, tours or seasons,<sup>71</sup> dependent on their own situation and that of the artist and audience. A promoter using the 'venue' model, for instance, may consider how an entire season fits together to ensure a balance of genres and audiences. To offer another example, 'artist-affiliated state' promoter Scottish Opera produces four operas a year (season), the choice of which needs to balance artistic desires and financial realities with the expectations of the audience. Hence it plans its seasons to include two operas from the 'top fifteen' operas,<sup>72</sup> the third a lesser known work by a well-known composer, and the fourth a lesser known work by a lesser known composer. The company also 'straddles' the languages, centuries, and composers, ensures it can afford it (which affects the size of the chorus and orchestra), finds the artists to sing and direct it, and then asks, 'How does *all* of that feel as an offering to the audience?' (Reedijk 2009, emphasis in original). The promoter's decision, then, regarding artist, event or programme is based on what the audience expect; whether the artist or programme is 'new', familiar, or a combination of both; what the company is capable of; the availability of artists; and the economic restraints on the event(s). Events may also be programmed to fit with record release dates, festivals or other temporal factors.

### ***Musical genre***

From the above example, it is immediately obvious that within opera, there are 'genres' of a sort, or types. Genre was discussed in the first part of the chapter in relation to participant behaviour, but genre is particularly interesting when considering the tensions between a promoter's own interests and knowledge and their need to make a profit. Promoters may be expert in certain genre frames, but not in others, and many will not attempt to promote an artist within a genre in which they have little knowledge (Mackie 2008). However, promoters – particularly 'commercial' promoters – are also susceptible to market forces and other people's tastes (Cloonan 2010), therefore in order to meet the desires of their audiences, they may employ consultants to book artists out of their field of expertise (Rodger 2009). In the case of St George's Bristol, an external jazz and 'world music' consultant is employed to programme those events because the expertise does not exist in-house. What is interesting within this system is that the consultant is not the

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<sup>71</sup> A season is a collection of events within a particular timeframe.

<sup>72</sup> The 'top fifteen' operas are somewhat disputed but refer to the operatic repertoire most often performed around the world and include Puccini's *Tosca* and *La Bohème*.

person taking the financial risk in the way that the promoter is; they obviously run the risk of their consultancy position, but short-term they ameliorate economic risk to the promoter. This can be problematic: the choice of artist should directly correlate to the level of risk involved for an event and there is sometimes a danger that a consultant's decisions may not be as necessarily rational as a promoter's, although, paradoxically, the promoter's decision to employ an expert consultant is both rational and pragmatic.

### ***Subverting genre conventions***

While promoters must understand genre conventions, they may also 'innovate', whereby genre rules may be subverted or played with. The combination or juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous artists and venues can then create unprecedented collaborations and musical styles. For instance, promoters at St George's Bristol brought together the Brodsky Quartet string ensemble with Nigerian kora player Tunde Jegede for a concert at the venue as part of its 2009 Migrations series; a collaboration that in all likelihood would not have happened without the cultural innovation of the promoter (Rolt 2009). Genre conventions may also be subverted if a promoter or venue is attempting to attract a new audience demographic whose musical, performative and behavioural expectations do not fit the 'traditional' genre frames. For example, Jane Donald, Head of Sales and Marketing at Glasgow's Concert Halls, recalled a Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) production of Video Games Live™, 'where we broke *all* the rules that we normally have for the RSNO' (Donald 2010, emphasis in original). At the event, late-comers were not forced to wait for an appropriate break in the music and the orchestral players were 'dressed down' and had cans of juice on stage. As Donald explained, '[the audience] behaved as they would have behaved in a gig. They took their drinks in and we kind of encouraged that! We kind of pre-empted that. People can come in when they want, they can clap, they can talk between the music, [and] when the music's playing' (ibid.). RSNO as the 'artist-affiliated' promoter had been in discussions with the venue staff before the event and hence they were expecting different audience behaviour; the artist and venue were therefore able to adapt *their* usual behaviour for classical concerts, thus preventing disaster.

Such 'cultural innovation' can be successful if planned for in advance but can also cause problems due to the potential clash of expectations and behaviour if executed poorly or

unexpected by the participants (see Frith 1996, p. 94). The combination of tropes and behaviours from different event types can also be problematic, even within the same genre or genre frame. For example, a live act ('participatory presentational') as part of a club night ('presentational participatory') can cause conflict within the event, as the following club promoter suggests:-

A lot of people don't like live acts [in club environments] because it upsets the flow of the night. People in a club environment are of a certain mindset, so the flow's kind of important for them. They like it to progress up and up and up, and sometimes a live act comes on and ... because the focus is switching from the DJs there [points left] [to] the stage there [points right], they start to get disorientated and then the flow goes and then they start to wander off (Caldwell 2009).

Hence it is of obvious importance for the promoter to choose an artist and a musical genre in which they have an understanding of the expected behavioural tropes, and to be particularly mindful if combining potentially conflicting event types and/or genres.

### **Temporality**

Live music events are temporally unique, and the time of year, day of the week, and start/end times are of vital importance to the success of an event. Live music events often take place within the night-time economy and traditionally, this economy has been based around the weekend, specifically Friday and Saturday nights, when the workforce has downed tools for the week and wants to participate in leisure activities. To an extent, live music follows this trend, but browsing through listings magazines in Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol shows that the decision as to the temporal location of live music is not that straightforward. Factors such as venue and artist availability mean that it would be virtually impossible for live music to take place only on Fridays and Saturdays in these cities. The nature of national tours also means that to play only weekend nights would be financially and logistically impractical.

Hence decisions as to the temporal location of an event are based on a variety of factors, again including artist and venue availability, genre, and audience expectations. The time of year chosen for an event is also based partly on historical factors (January traditionally being a fallow period for live music) and environmental factors (the weather, for example). Some events can take on a temporal life of their own by their association with

certain times of the year or the month. The Headcharge event in Sheffield, for example, took place on the last Friday of the month, and Glasgow's Celtic Connections takes place in January. The reasons for these temporal decisions are partly economic and partly cultural. Headcharge was timed to coincide with 'pay day', a time of the month when people tend to feel financially flush and willing to party. The Celtic Connections festival was originally devised partly as an event to 'plug a hole in the calendar' (Donald 2010), but as it has evolved has had other purposes added to it – social and educational as well as economic.

Venues and promoters may also favour certain days of the week and build a pattern to their events. For example, the Director of St George's Bristol, Suzanne Rolt, explained that the venue's bookers have established a pattern whereby Thursday night is the jazz/'world music' night, Friday night is for high-status touring international classical artists, and the Saturday night is often an event featuring a local choir or orchestra.<sup>73</sup> The venue's bookers also programme Thursday lunchtime concerts in the knowledge that generally the only audience able to attend will be retirees, students and the unemployed (Rolt 2009).

### ***Start/end times***

Live music events may take place at any point during the day or night but the nuances of the temporal location of the event within each segment of the day can directly impact on the success of the event. Those out at a club, for example, who may be using (illegal) stimulants in order to stay awake, would expect to go out late and stay out till the early hours, whereas those who have babysitters or children to consider may prefer an earlier end (Deadman 2008). The start and end time of an event is also important as certain audiences do not want to be out late due to work commitments or a fear of clashing with a younger audience in city centres.<sup>74</sup> The decisions as to start and end times are therefore based on the promoter's understanding as to the artist's and audience's expectations, but

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<sup>73</sup> The programming of local orchestras on Saturday nights is to suit members who work during the week; the most convenient time for such groups to rehearse is on the Saturday morning before the performance in the evening (Rolt 2009).

<sup>74</sup> Indeed, a recurrent theme in the research was the anxiety that older audiences felt about mixing with younger audiences.

are also affected by the promoter's locality, the venue's curfew (see Webster, in press), and by related external factors such as local transport networks and licensing laws, as was covered in Chapter Five.

The start time also denotes both the focus of the event itself and the participant structure within, akin to the elevation of a particular focus of the event in the publicity material (social, aesthetic, etc.), as is explored in Chapter Eight. Within different venues, genre frames and types of event, there are immediately apparent differences in the role of the opening times that are advertised in advance. For instance, the start time specified by St George's Bristol is usually the *actual* time the (usually 'presentational') performance starts. Although attendees will often arrive in good time to acquaint themselves with the venue, perform social duties or relax with a drink, there is no need to arrive early as their pre-booked tickets specify their seating position. At King Tut's, however, the advertised time is when the doors to the upstairs venue open (which can be up to an hour before the first performer is due to take the stage), allowing attendees to socialise and use the bar facilities, but also to stake their place within the (mostly unseated) venue for a (usually 'participatory presentational') event. At Fagan's folk pub, there is little or no pre-promotion or need for a start time *per se*; the participatory nature of the folk sessions means that participants can enter and leave at any point during the evening, even while the music is playing.

For multi-focus, multi-day events such as outdoor festivals, however, start times operate somewhat differently; audiences are already through 'the door' but information about start times is important to enable audiences to be in the right place at the right time for their chosen artist.<sup>75</sup> The 'start times' at festivals also indicate the status and popularity of the artist as the 'headliner' will usually close the day's events (see Webster, in press, for discussion about encores in this context). In general, start times will usually be decided in collaboration between the promoter, the venue, and, if appropriate, the booking agent and/or the artists themselves, but conflicts may occur when artists (and their agents) vie for the coveted headline slot.

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<sup>75</sup> Festivals are particularly interesting because they may not be temporally restricted in the same way that a permanent venue is: the festival may have a twenty-four hour licence, for example, and there will not be the same issues around catching the last bus home (Hagan 2011).

### ***Running order and event programming***

As the above shows, the planning of the programme or running order is another important role for the promoter in the temporal planning of the event if there is more than one performer or more than one musical work to be performed.<sup>76</sup> If a promoter is using the 'artist-affiliated' model, they will tend to have more control over the musical structure of the performance, but those using the 'independent' and 'venue' models are still able to control elements of the structure to an extent, by choosing the appropriate support act, or choosing appropriate entrance and exit music for the event (see Chapter Nine). However, other industry personnel besides the promoter such as tour managers, agents and venue managers may also influence decisions over running orders, hence the promoter's role becomes one of mediation between such parties.

The majority of the promoters interviewed are very conscious of how the running order affects the success of the evening and how it can directly affect participant behaviour. As hip hop/dubstep promoter Rose Maclean (2008) explained, the running order is 'a subliminal way of getting the audience to do what you want'. Promoters understand that the event has to contain a meta-narrative, or dramatic thread, that tends to climax with the main 'act' or musical work of the evening. For example:-

It's like a good firework display, I always think of, you know. First of all, don't get lots of shitty little cheap fireworks; get a few really spectacular ones. It's like anything, you kind of, you get the order, you build it up; you've got to think of the climax (Deadman 2008).

Promoters generally perceived the decision as to the running order, if required, as instinctual: a 'sedimentation of knowledge' (Webb 2007, p.33) acquired via experience at similar events over a period of time, or what Gareth Dylan Smith (2011) would define as 'passive learning realisation'. Club promoters, for example, are aware that certain DJs work better at the start or end of a night, to warm people up, or to close the night appropriately, and also that certain (usually resident) DJs prefer to play at the beginning or end of the event (Caldwell 2009). Again, the running order depends on the type of

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<sup>76</sup> It should be pointed out that for artists that tour as a 'package' with their own crew and equipment, the promoter's role in decisions such as the running order and other aspects of the planning stage will be greatly decreased.

event, hence a 'presentational' event usually has a strict running order whereas a 'participatory' event will often be more fluid.

### ***Planning the optimum environment***

To reiterate a point made at the start of this section, the role of the promoter in planning any live music event is to mediate between the artist and the venue. Once the promoter and artist (and agent if used) have temporarily arranged (pencilled in) the date of the event, the venue must be chosen and booked, based on the promoter's (and/or agent's) knowledge of the locality and the type of event. As pointed out in Chapter Four, however, venues using Brennan and Webster's (2011) 'venue model' will choose the most appropriate artist for the *venue*. While artists, events, or promoters may become associated with particular venues, at some point an initial decision as to the choice of venue will have been made, as is now examined.

The decision as to which venue to book is clearly affected by geographical factors. As shown in previous chapters, promoters may be local, regional, national, or international, which affects who is promoted by whom, and where. It is usually the artist or their agent rather than the promoter (unless using the 'artist-affiliated model'), however, who is responsible for the 'routing' of a national or global tour, or the direction the tour takes around the country or globe, and as far as possible, they attempt for a sensible route with as few 'zig zags' as possible. As Laing (2008) illustrates, national live music tours are either centrifugal (fan base → performer) or centripetal (performer → fan base). A UK arena tour, for example, is centrifugal and geographically determined by the size and location of arenas around the country, which correspond to large conurbations. Laing uses Kanye West's 2008 UK tour to demonstrate this concept, which took in London, Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester, forming a 'backbone' up the centre of the UK. Conversely, a centripetal tour sees the artist travelling to their fan base and tours are therefore routed where the agent, artist and promoter can guarantee 'pockets' of fans within the UK. Economically, however, it makes more sense to perform one gig in a large venue than four or five shows in smaller venues because of the necessary increase in fees associated with a higher number of dates, and hence a decrease in promoters' profits.

Within the geographical remit, in mediating between artist and venue all promoters deliberately choose an environment that is the most appropriate for the artist, the event type, the genre frame, and the type of audience they wish to attract, based on venue availability, budgetary capacity, and their assumptions of artist and audience expectations. Hence for Sheffield-based promoter Stuart Basford:-

[An agent] will ring me up and say so-and-so's available. I have to then think, 'Where will that fit? Which venue have I got that that will fit in? Does it want to be sit down or standing up? Does it want to be the back of a pub or does it want to be a theatre?' You try to think, 'What is the audience for that?' (Basford 2009).

Tom Waits, for example, 'won't play anywhere ... He loves the theatre, the [Edinburgh] Playhouse, because it's all proscenium arch, red velvet, seats and gold paint – *that's* what he wants. He wants theatres, or amazing rooms. I mean he wouldn't play [Glasgow's] SECC; he just wouldn't' (Mackie 2008, emphasis in original).

However, there are many artists who do not have the luxury of such a choice and are therefore 'forced' to perform in less than 'ideal' environments. Hence while the artist may want to play a particular venue, the promoter may decide that it is inappropriate for the intended audience and/or the promoter's budget, and must therefore negotiate with the artist (and/or agent). In this way, the status of the artist is again very apparent and necessarily understood by the promoter; their role in the planning stage is therefore to balance a number of conflicting interests in their choice of venue in order to make a profit rather than a loss. For all promoters, the size of the venue is therefore a vital factor in the planning of an event. If the venue is too small for the size, scale and type of event, the promoter loses out on potential ticket sales; too large, and the promoter risks losing money (economic capital) and losing face (social/cultural capital) with the artist and agent (and audience).

### **Venue types**

To understand the types of venue available to the promoter, the following typologies are offered. Reynolds (2008) classifies music venues into ten types, ranging from small-scale pubs to large-scale arenas, and by a number of factors including audience capacity, ratio of in-house to outside promotion, frequency of events, and show types. Frith (2008b) has

conceptualised that venues can be ideologically typologised and can be music determined (music is the purpose of build/rebuild), music related, leisure determined and commercial or non-commercial, or useable spaces not designed or usually used for music. Reynolds' typology, although based on venues in the United States, offers an interesting perspective on the capacity of the venue and its operation in terms of the live music industries, whereas Frith's is broader but less specific as to size and operation. The definition of a social space that is a 'music venue' is twofold, however, as the venue consists of the physical space itself which is 'socially defined by its expected uses' (Becker 2004, p. 20), but is also constituted by the human activities and decisions of those who own it and/or work there. What this shows is that venues in the UK are difficult to typologise as each one is unique and operates within its own dynamic structures; this is also partly what renders each local live music ecology unique.

Finnegan (2007) shows that certain musical genres and genre frames are apparent in different types of venues, however, and this study has also shown that the majority of live music takes place in the 'predictable' spaces listed by Reynolds, appropriate to the genre frame. However, creative promoters also promote in unusual venues, and/or Frith's fourth category. In this way, a space or venue previously associated with a particular usage or musical genre can acquire new meaning via the innovations of the promoter. For example, a dairy farm in Somerset is now synonymous with Glastonbury Festival, and a previously unknown town in the United States – Woodstock – is now a byword for the music, fashion, behaviour and spirit of the late 1960s. In a similar vein, events such as Glasgow's Celtic Connections, Bristol's Harbour Festival, and Sheffield's Tramlines encourage people to visit the area and provide a unique selling point for each city that may increase its economic and cultural status.

### **Types of environment**

Thus a live music event can either be held indoors or outdoors, in a space regularly used for music or one that is more unusual. While indoor venues carry their own complications, Frith's 'useable spaces not designed or usually used for music', including outdoor events such as festivals, are often affected by environmental factors, hence the decision taken by the promoter to stage an outdoor event is not one to be taken lightly (Roberts 2010). Such transitory events often require the construction of temporary

staging and amenities, and are somewhat reliant on the weather and the amount of daylight.

Environmental decisions are not limited to whether an event takes place indoors or outdoors, however: environment can also refer to the surroundings, external appearance, ambience, décor, formality, or cleanliness of a venue, in terms of what is most appropriate for the artist or type of event being promoted. The external appearance of a venue also hints at its internal ambience (Small 1998; Hodkinson 2002) and musical discourse (Frith 1996). Venues with remits towards audience development, for example, necessarily aim to attract a wide demographic therefore their external appearances are deliberately non-subcultural. The Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, for instance, keeps its internal and external lighting bright so as not to discourage older people who 'prefer it that way' (Hodge 2009). The outside of the Lakota, on the other hand, being an 'underground' nightclub with no such restrictions, is covered in a massive graffiti mural and has blackened windows, hinting at the subcultural environment inside.

The promoter must therefore be aware of how the venue can attract and/or repel potential clientele and also impact on actual participant behaviour. At St George's, for example, some audience members commented that the venue's past life as a chapel led to more formal behaviour, comparing the venue favourably to others that were 'dark and unclean' and 'smelt of urine'<sup>77</sup> (sometimes referred to as, literally, the 'toilet venue circuit'). Others commented on St George's' relatively intimate size, analogising this to the difference between one's behaviour in an 'anonymous' large city compared to that in a village where 'everyone knows each other', and meaning that one was better behaved in the St George's 'village'. The environment and cleanliness of a venue therefore acts as a background modifier which influences both the experience and behaviour of the participants. The struggle for the promoter in all the above, however, is to choose a venue that suits the expectations of the majority of the artist and audience and that is within budget.

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<sup>77</sup> On this point, Matilla and Wirtz (2001, quoted in Nelson 2009) found that when ambient scent and music are congruent with each other, consumers rate the environment significantly more positively, therefore an 'unpleasant' smell may suit certain genre frames associated with being 'raw' and 'dirty'.

## Mediating the experience

When planning the most appropriate environment for a live music event, the promoter must also make decisions about the type of aural and visual mediation required for that event. The acoustic properties of a particular venue dictate, to an extent, whether an artist requires amplification beyond their basic voice or instrument, unless their instrument is electrically-powered or amplified. At larger venues, the absence of sound mediation would be inappropriate as the size of the venue would mean inadequate volume or a necessary increase in the number of artists and hence added expense. Promoters will either hire sound and light equipment themselves, use the venue's pre-existing equipment, or the artist will use or tour with their own. Arenas, for example, are often just 'shells' with only dressing rooms and power supplies, and therefore sound and visual technology must be brought in, either by the artist or hired in by the promoter (Mackie 2008).

Depending on the genre frame, a live music event is, for some, as much about the visual (theatrical) elements as the aural ones (Cottrell 2004, p. 172), and promoters, venues, and all those behind-the-scenes put time, money, and effort into creating an aural and visual environment conducive for a particular event, including 'dramatic techniques' such as lighting or staging (Cohen 1991, p.82). However, such an environment potentially costs money and again, the promoter balances the expectations of the participants with what is affordable and available. The promoter of Bristol's monthly Tribe of Frog psy-trance event, for example, explained that the Lakota nightclub is also just a shell before his team decorate it with psychedelic UV backdrops, lasers, and disco balls; it takes seven days to set the night up at the venue and four days to take it back down. In this way, the event is focused as much on the visual elements as the musical ones, and the audience expect a musical *and* a visual experience. Indeed, some attendees I interviewed claimed that they attended the event more for the visual and social elements than the music, some going so far as to claim to actively *dislike* the music played at the event (as did some attendees of the 2009 Sharrow Festival). In this way, the promoter necessarily balances the desires of those who are in attendance for one element of the event – the music – with those who are there for others, namely the visual and social elements.

## ***Planning for the optimum community of participants***

As the above shows, live music events consist of a complex conjoining of human participants with sometimes differing behavioural and performative expectations. In order to forestall any related issues, then, the promoter plans for an optimum community of participants who will understand the behavioural conventions required. They do this partly via control of the door and via advance decisions around legal and illegal drugs, as is discussed below.

### **The Door**

The door operates as a 'liminal portal', separating the ritual from the everyday. In a way, the start of the event and the door is one of the most important parts of the event for the promoter, as it is the point at which the planning and promotion of the show ends<sup>78</sup> and the production begins: when a venue transforms from an empty shell into a space for music; when a musician becomes a performing artist; and when a loose group of individuals becomes an audience. The live music event is therefore ritualised, transforming those within it into their relevant ritual groupings, separate from everyday society. Control of the door is therefore of fundamental importance to a promoter in their role as 'overseer' (Schechner 1993, p. 43) or 'ritual specialist' (Fonarow 2006, p. 21), hence the ubiquitous R.O.A.R. (Right of Admission Reserved) on the backs of many tickets, allowing the promoter, the venue or, more usually, 'the management', to refuse entry to or remove unwelcome customers. While the promoter may not have specific control or management of the door – it may be dealt with by the venue – the decision as to the choice of venue is partly based on the appropriateness of the door controls (and the cooperation of the venue) for the promoter's event. The door to the backstage area (if used) is also necessary to control as this separates the 'ritual practitioners' from the 'participant spectators' (ibid.); as the size and scale of an event increases, so too does the elaborateness of the systems for allowing entry to this part of the venue (J. Thompson 2010).

The role of the promoter is to facilitate the financial transaction between consumer and producer (if there is one), hence the door is also the point at which the passing of money

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<sup>78</sup> Although see Chapter Eight as regards simultaneous promotion/production at some events.

is mediated (Small 1998, p. 36), or the entitlement to an event via a ticket is realised. The following Bristol-based promoter encapsulated the importance of the door in this process by describing his occasional 'anxiety dreams' before the day of a show:-

The promoter's worst nightmare is stopping a thousand people piling into a venue because the door opens and there's nobody there to take the tickets or take the money or do whatever. But of course that would never happen because you never open a venue until you've got your cash register ready and your security stood there to, you know ... But *that's* the dream: all that organising and everyone just piles in and they don't pay and you've still got to pay everybody (anonymised, emphasis in original).

To prevent their 'worst nightmare' occurring, then, the promoter controls the door in a variety of ways: by use of opening times, the guestlist, 'door pickers' and greeters, dress code, and security personnel; such devices are returned to in later chapters.

'Door policy', as in who will be allowed entry to the event or encouraged or discouraged to enter, is therefore an important means of attracting and maintaining an optimum community of participants, as is the use of certain formal and informal dress codes, if required. For example, Sheffield-based promoter of Razor Stiletto, Ralph Razor, aware of his subcultural clientele and their desire for open-mindedness at the event, explained that, 'if there's a big group of kind of townie<sup>79</sup> meathead lads, they wouldn't get in' (Razor 2008). He went on to explain that because his event welcomes a flamboyant and sometimes cross-dressing audience, he would actively deny entry to those he perceives as 'mainstream' and who might turn up and go "Oh my god, there's a guy wearing eyeliner" and go over and punch him' (ibid.). As Thornton (1995, p. 114) writes, door pickers are the 'key readers and makers of the "meaning of style"', therefore the door policy determines the nature of the event to an extent and allows the promoter to avoid potential conflicts before the person enters the venue.

### **Legal and illegal drugs**

Once through the door, the actual behaviour of the participants may be affected by the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, and the promoter pre-empts and plans for an

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<sup>79</sup> A 'townie' is commonly used derogatively to refer to someone who forms part of the mainstream 'mass' populace and who is perceived as unsophisticated or uncultured.

optimum community of participants via their choice of venue and its policies towards such substances. While music appears to cause physiological and psychological effects in itself (Pinker 1998, p. 528), live music is inextricably linked to *actual* drug taking, both legal and illegal, from the first public concerts which took place in taverns (Forsyth 1985, p. 25), to ecstasy consumption at free parties (Thornton 1995; Reynolds 1998; Malbon 1999). The use of such drugs can therefore enhance the live music experience for its participants but will also greatly impact on their behaviour. The choice of venue for a promoter is therefore linked to the type of drugs associated and allowed (tolerated) within that venue and the type of experience the promoter expects the audience to desire. For example, one (anonymised) nightclub owner stated that as far as they're concerned, 'drugs are a fact of life', especially in dance clubs. The venue's policy is to remove those who are obviously dealing and/or buying drugs or who are blatantly taking them, but the owner added that the police usually turn a blind eye to drug use at the club as the venue is seen as a 'safe space' at which there is rarely any trouble. In this way, a promoter looking to hire the club must understand the club's relatively relaxed attitude towards drug-taking, therefore their decision to use the club would be based on the understanding that their event could, by proxy, be associated by some as a night involving the consumption of illegal drugs.

Alcohol, on the other hand, is legal and perceived as a socially acceptable drug in the UK, associated with the night-time leisure economy (see Hadfield 2006) and available (or being consumed) at all my case study venues and events. Promoters therefore choose the appropriate venue for their event based partly on that venue's attitude towards and management of the consumption of alcohol, and partly on audience expectations. For example, as Gordon Hodge, Glasgow's Concert Halls' Senior Customer Service Manager, explained: 'We would *never* allow [alcohol in the auditorium] for an orchestral, classical performance, but ... we would *never* say no to drinks in for the Bootleg Beatles because it would just cause more hoo-ha than not allowing people in with it' (Hodge 2009, emphasis in original). Alcohol is usually available from a bar area either external to the auditorium (in the case of the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall), or internal to the auditorium (in the case of King Tut's Wah Wah Hut). With the latter, by purchasing their drinks within the auditorium, audience members understand that they are allowed to drink during the performance; with the former, there is more scope for confusion. A promoter using a 'dry' venue (St George's Bristol, for instance) therefore needs to be aware of the

restrictions on alcohol within the auditorium itself, but also the potential benefits from not allowing the audience to drink during the performance, namely an increased focus on the music rather than a 'fun time and a bit of drink with some nice noise in the background' (Prestwich 2009). In this way, the use and control of legal and illegal drugs also suggests the type of event.

However, the consumption of legal and illegal drugs both brings benefits and poses problems for the promoter, as was shown in Chapter Five. On the one hand, there is the need to fulfil the expectations of the artist and audience, and, in the case of those using the 'venue model', a financial imperative to sell alcohol. On the other hand, issues around licensing, under-age drinking and illegal drug consumption can be a source of conflict. The decision as to whether alcohol (or other drugs) can be consumed in the room where music is being performed or played is therefore usually at the discretion of the venue, in consultation with the promoter.

### ***Planning the participant structure***

Drawing on Goffman's 1974 work on participant framework, Fonarow defines a ritual as consisting of temporal and spatial practices that organise bodies into specific activities which have participant structures that produce particular psychological states in the participants (2006, p. 98), whereby the participant structure is the expected behaviours within it (ibid., p. 4). Thus the promoter's decisions as 'ritual specialist' as to a variety of factors within the event dictate, to an extent, the participant structure therein.

Participant structure can affect both the number of tickets available for the show (and hence the success of the event), the overall ambience, and the behaviour of the participants.

To return to the factors affecting behaviour set out in the introduction to this chapter, background modifiers of actual behaviour include the spatial layout of the venue (seated or standing), the location of the 'social zone', and permanent and temporary, printed and digital visual signage. Therefore as well as the factors discussed above, promoters also choose venues partly based on the 'parameters of possible participation', namely what forms of participation are available to the participants, based on assumptions about their



zones can be seen to greater and lesser extents across many music genres and event types, however, and may be defined by a variety of factors such as age, wealth, (sub)cultural capital, economics, and demographics. For example, at an opera performance, there will usually be a marked difference between the age, wealth and cultural status of those sitting in the dress circle from those in the gods, whereas at a salsa club, the zones will be based around ability (Urquía 2004). It is argued here that while such ‘zones of participation’ may form naturally, they may also be constructed by the promoter through the use of a number of elements such as seating or price bands.

To add to Fonarow’s concept of zones, the concept of ‘social zones’ is posited, defined as those areas where the focus is on social interaction rather than music, (often) outside the musical performance zone or auditorium and often centred around a bar area.<sup>80</sup> The location of the social zone can be ‘external’, ‘internal-central’, or ‘internal-peripheral’. In other words, the social zone can be located outside the auditorium itself, as with an opera house; be all-encompassing, as at a dance club; or at the edges of the space, often at the back of the venue, at the furthest point away from the stage. While many venues have spatially fixed social zones, some venues are able to be flexible in their location through the use of curtains or barriers. Social zones may also be found backstage, but are usually kept separate from frontstage areas.

### **Number of foci**

As well as ‘zones’, the focus of an event also dictates behaviour to an extent, and a live music event can either have a singular focus – the orchestra on stage, for example – or a number of foci – a festival with multiple stages, or a nightclub with multiple rooms and DJs performing at the same time. Again, the number of foci relates to genre frames, event types and audience expectations, but also economic constraints; more artists and stages can mean more financial outlay by the promoter, after all. Some venues are flexible as to their total capacity and may close off sections of the venue depending on the capacity required by the promoter. At Bristol’s Lakota nightclub, for instance, external promoters

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<sup>80</sup> Of interest is when the sound level from the ‘social zone’ impacts on the sound level of the music and the impact that this can have on the various actors within the live music event. For example, ‘A&R gigs’ are notorious for the noise level of ‘zone three’ (the social zone at an indie gig) competing with the on-stage sound.

can hire the entire club with its four 'arenas', bar area and outdoor smoking area, or the club's internal logic can be restructured if the promoter requires fewer rooms; arenas and staircases can be closed off to suit the requirements of the event.

Venues may have one (or more) auditorium or space that can be used for music, such as St George's Bristol, or may be a collection of venues managed and booked internally, such as Glasgow's Concert Halls. However, some venues are simply not adaptable enough to accommodate the event the promoter wishes to promote, hence to maintain flexibility over their programmes, even a 'venue-as-promoter' may occasionally promote outside of its own space. Sheffield's Corporation rock club occasionally promotes shows in Manchester, for example (Hobson 2008), and St George's Bristol programmes an annual African dance party at Bristol Zoo to allow space for a dancefloor (Rolt 2009).

### **Spatial layout**

Once the venue has been chosen to suit the artist (or vice versa), the spatial layout of the venue must be chosen to suit the desired parameters of possible participation. The decision as to the spatial layout is based on the promoter's understanding of the expected age, demographic and expectations of the audience they seek to attract. For example, one interviewee stated that while it was permissible to change a standing gig to a seated gig, the opposite was not the case as it would lead to complaints from those who prefer to sit (Donald 2010). Promoters therefore rely both on their own knowledge of the genre frame and its associated behavioural conventions, and on information via the formal and informal networks within the live music sector in order to understand what type of event they will be promoting and to whom (White 2010).

Promoters are also able to make adjustments to the layout of venues through temporary 'walls' such as curtains, crowd barriers, or seating, particularly if audience numbers are lower (or higher) than expected. Chris Wilson of Sheffield's Boardwalk explained how such devices impact on participant structure and therefore experience. The majority of bands appearing at the venue prefer the audience to be standing, but if there have been low advance sales, venue staff pull a curtain across the middle of the room in order to positively encourage the audience to watch the band from the stage side of the curtain, or put out chairs and tables. The chairs and tables force the audience to spread out and create both an illusion of busyness and encourage people to move to the front 'because

they don't feel as threatened if they're sat down' (Wilson 2008). St George's Bristol, on the other hand, is able to close off the upstairs balcony if numbers are low, as is King Tut's, and the capacity of Glasgow's SECC varies depending on the event (albeit planned in advance); the largest capacity being ten thousand for a band such as Arctic Monkeys, down to two and a half thousand for smaller shows, achieved by dividing the room with floor-length black curtains.

### **Ticket types**

To return to the continuum in Figure 7-2, a promoter may also use different ticket types in order to manage the different types of participant movement. Tickets allow promoters to accurately count their customers, to control entry to an event, and hence the management of the space. A promoter therefore has a number of choices when deciding which ticketing method to use to manage the participant structure: 'general admission' (standing, seated, or a mixture of both); 'semi-allocated' (some allocated seating, some general admission); or 'fully allocated'. General admission allows the customer a greater freedom of choice in their location at the event, although conversely, if they arrive late that choice may be restricted. Advance seating allocation allows for some choice before the event for the consumer but less so at the event itself. Many venues allow the audience to choose their seat location in advance, and this decision by the audience member often correlates to ticket price, comfort, sightlines and/or proximity to the artist. Digital technology allows some venues to display seating plans to enable their audiences to make an informed choice about where to sit; this can backfire, however, as an event that is clearly undersold can be off-putting (see Lefsetz 2010).

### ***Planning for profitability***

The final subsection of this chapter examines how the promoter plans for profitability, and how they necessarily make both assumptions and compromises based on their experiential and empirical knowledge. The first consideration is over access to the event, namely whether it is public or private: accessible to all or deliberately restricted to invitees only, the most obvious examples of the latter being a wedding or a private birthday party. Live music events, while often publicly accessible, may be deliberately targeted at potential audiences in such a way as to render them 'private', in the sense that they are kept hidden or even prohibited from those outside the genre frame through

a promoter's door policy, as shown above, or via other methods, as discussed in the following chapter.

### **Ticket price**

Once the decision has been made over access to the event, the promoter must then set a ticket price. In a sense, the ticket price is the part of the planning process where the promoter takes the financial gamble, as this is the key decision as to whether a promoter loses, breaks even, or makes a profit. Even if the event is free, the promoter may be risking their own money, time or status within the community. Combining the model of seating types with the ticket types set out in Chapter Four, promoters are able to choose from the following nine ticketing models, as shown in Table 7-1:-

**Table 7-1: Model of ticket types available to the promoter**

	General admission	Semi-allocated	Fully allocated
Free			
Donation			
Fixed price			

The decision as to the ticket price is therefore based on a number of factors including: the artist (and agent's) fee, the venue hire and production costs, publicity costs, and box office commission, set against anticipated audience numbers and predicted profit margins. Hence decisions as to ticket prices are based on a mixture of expected risk (or whether the risks can be ameliorated via other, less risky shows), historical data, and 'gut feeling' (Donald 2010). Ticket price also relates to the genre frame, event type, and 'art world' to an extent, simply by dint of the level of theatricality and number of musicians and crew needing to get paid. The most expensive show I saw during my research period, for example, was Star Wars in Concert at Glasgow's SECC, promoted by DF Concerts, where tickets were between twenty-five and seventy-five pounds for a two-hour show featuring a full symphony orchestra and (allegedly) four million pounds' worth of large video screen. The promoter's decision as regards ticket price may also be affected by a

number of external factors such as competition from other events and the state of the global economy, as was covered in previous chapters.

A number of commentators have noted that the cost of tickets for live music has been rising faster than inflation (see Krueger 2005; Frith 2007; Brennan and Webster 2010). However, the cost of a ticket is an important part of the audience experience and, as ticket prices continue to increase, promoters should remember the following comment by the Concert Promoters Association:-

The excitement generated at live concerts derives from full houses and the audience inside knowing there are others outside who would love to trade places. Full houses generate atmosphere and add to the demand for more live music ... Live music is best when it is enjoyed by real fans and those with the greatest appreciation of each artiste's musical offerings; it is not the exclusive right of those with the deepest pockets (cited in Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2007, Evidence 16).

The optimum ticket price for the promoter, then, is one that is affordable to the general public in order that the event sells out, so as to leave some fans without tickets who will then attend the next show (or that of a similar artist or event) (ibid.). Hence the decision as to the ticket price is a balancing act between the needs of the artist, the expectations and economic capacity of the audience, and the promoter's own need to make a profit, dependent on the level and type of risks discussed in Chapter Four. If the ticket price is too high, the audience will not come, but too low, and the promoter risks making a financial loss.

### **Ticket availability**

Research by Cavicchi (1998) and Beaven and Laws (2007) has shown that ticket buying is an important part of the ritual of concert and festival attendance: rather than simply a functional transaction, it is part of the pre-liminal stage of the event. Once the cost(s) of the ticket has been decided with which to maximise the promoter's profit but not to dissuade the potential audience, the next stage for the promoter to consider is therefore the method(s) of ticket purchase, and whether tickets will be sold in advance or at the event itself. A promoter at a small-scale show may be able to sell or distribute tickets personally to the audience, but a promoter at a large-scale show instead relies on secondary intermediaries to sell the advance tickets on their behalf. For a show at

Glasgow's SECC arena, say, the promoter *must* sell tickets in advance. First, it would be nigh on logistically impossible to service ten thousand people all wanting to buy tickets on the day of the show; second, this allows tickets to be sold in physical and digital outlets beyond the venue itself; and third, this enables the promoter to know in advance whether they will be in profit or loss. Advance sales may also allow the promoter to access cash before the event (and to build interest on that cash) and offer an indication of likely sales. As Diggle suggests, tickets are also sold in advance because promoters do not trust the 'fickle public' to keep their promise to see the show. He advises that 'The moment that someone wants to attend a show, obtain a commitment from them' in the form of a ticket (Diggle 1994, pp. 233-4).

The immediate availability of the product to the audience – or what Diggle describes as the 'proxy-product' (ibid.) – in the form of a ticket for a future event is therefore useful for a promoter as it enables the potential attendee to make their purchase following the initial engagement. Even if an event is free, it can still be ticketed in advance. Events which are free are advantageous in the fact that the cost of the ticket will not be a barrier to attendance, but free events have inherent *disadvantages* as well, in that no financial transaction between promoter and audience has been (or will be) obtained. A door price, whether in advance or on the door, also has the effect of discouraging some people who would rather not pay, or whose personal economic valuation of the event is lower than the cost of the ticket. Hence a comedian's manager once explained to me about the 'nutter tax' of fifteen pounds that he imposes on the door which has the effect of discouraging the 'nutters' and ensures the optimum audience; any door price less than fifteen pounds tends to attract less than desirable types to the show. The ticket price is therefore one means of constructing an optimum community of participants, but is also a fine balance between attracting a 'quantity' and a 'quality' audience, as is further explored in the following chapter on publicity.

## Summary

This chapter has set out a typology of events with which to understand the live music event and has shown that the promoter makes decisions about an array of factors that must be planned for in order to create a successful event. Hence the promoter plans for a unique event in the most appropriate venue for the artist, the audience, and the genre

frame. They plan in order that the event contains an optimum community of participants and participant structure, so as to maximise profitability for the promoter, whether economic, social, cultural or otherwise. In this way, the promoter must balance a variety of conflicting interests against their own need to make a profit, namely the expectations and requirements of the artist, the audience, and the venue.

By matching venue to artist and audience, the promoter may also act as an 'innovator' whose decisions in the planning stage can affect perceptions of particular places, genres, and artists. However, mistakes by the promoter in the planning stage can have far-reaching consequences. The live music event is a complex conjoining of human participants in a temporally and spatially specific location, hence mistakes can be dangerous, even. If a record label, say, joins two artists together from different genre worlds for a so-called 'crossover' album, the worst outcome is that the album is panned by the critics and does not sell to its intended audience. For the promoter, on the other hand, their 'product' is the event, which, as shown in Chapter Two, is a potential site of conflict due to the number of differing parties in attendance. As cultural innovators, then, promoters must therefore be aware that the juxtaposition of different demographic and (sub)cultural factions in the crowd – fans of Marilyn Manson and Eminem, for example (White 2010) – can be problematic, and the safety of the participants should not be compromised by either the promoter's drive to innovate and/or profit.

In conclusion, then, the promoter's role is both variable and complex, and the decisions made by the promoter during the planning process are vital for the success of the event and the experience for all participants. This chapter has briefly discussed the promoter's decisions in the planning stage as concerns the assembly of an optimum community of participants; the next chapter examines how the promoter attracts such participants.

# Part Three: Chapter Eight: Publicising the live music event

## Introduction

The previous chapter considered the decisions that a promoter must make in the planning stage and how these may impact on the experience for the participants at the event itself. This chapter deals with the second of the promoter's three responsibilities defined in Chapter Four. It explores the ways in which the promoter publicises the live music event in order to sell it to the audience on behalf of the venue and the artist. The promoter therefore mediates between the artist and the venue at one end ('business-to-business'), and the audience at the other ('business-to-consumer'), in order to construct the optimum community of participants for the event. However, as shown in previous chapters, there may be further intermediaries between each party, dependent on the size and scale of the show.

The range of decisions and actions surrounding the publicising and selling of a live music event are multifarious, and, as with the planning process, the promoter's decisions and actions at this stage are fundamental to the success of the event and the experience of the participants. This chapter shows that while the promoter is ultimately responsible for publicising – marketing – the show, at one and the same time they are reliant on a variety of other sources, which relate both to the networks explored in Chapter Six and the live music ecology. The paradox here is that, while on the one hand, the promoter needs as many people as possible to come to their event in order not to make a loss, on the other hand, many promoters need to attract the 'right' audience, sometimes by deliberately dissuading people from attending.

While previous commentators have written about publicity in the context of subcultural formation (for example, Thornton 1995; Hodkinson 2002), the aim of this chapter is to examine the choices and practices of *all* promoters when attempting to attract an audience to their event, and to show how technology has revolutionised the promotion of live music. As Peterson and Anand suggest, technology provides the tools with which people and institutions augment their abilities to communicate, and therefore changes in communication technology 'profoundly destabilise and create new opportunities in art

and culture’ (2004, p. 314). Throughout the twenty-first century, the rapid growth of the internet and associated technologies has meant a fundamental change to the means of publicity available to promoters – although pre-internet methods are still widely used – and this chapter explores some of these changes. It is worth highlighting the differences between the recording industries – which failed to successfully exploit internet technology and is now struggling to readjust in a digital world – and the live music industries, which have generally embraced the possibilities of the internet,<sup>81</sup> and which have now overtaken the recording industries within the UK economy (Page and Carey 2010).

This chapter therefore examines the means of publicity available and used by live music promoters, with the caveats that, firstly, none, some or all of them may be used by the promoter, dependent on the type and scale of the event being promoted; and secondly, that the demarcations between promoter, artist, audience and venue can become blurred depending on the type of event and promotional model. As with planning a live music event, publicising such an event depends on the promoter working with a number of secondary intermediaries to work on behalf of the artist and the venue. The publicising of a show may therefore be done in the following ways:-

- ‘Promoter-generated publicity’,<sup>82</sup> including ‘traditional’ pre-internet means such as posters and flyers, and digital publicity;
- ‘Artist-generated publicity’, such as the artist’s own website or blog;
- ‘Venue-generated publicity’, including season brochures;
- ‘Media-generated publicity’, such as previews and radio plugs;
- ‘Audience-generated publicity’, such as word of mouth and social networking sites;

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<sup>81</sup> See Coupe (2003) for discussion of the early adoption of primitive email systems by promoters in the 1980s.

<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that promoters may employ a PR agency to conduct the publicity campaign on their behalf.

- 'Ticket agent-generated publicity', based on ticket agents' databases of customer details and past attendances.

One point about all of the above is that what starts as one category may move to another category when in the public domain: a flyer produced and distributed by the promoter may be passed from one fan to another, or an email from an artist may be forwarded to another fan. What is true for all of the above is that while the promoter has the overall responsibility for the publicity of the event, this may take on a life of its own once the promotional machine is in gear, which can be (dis)advantageous to the promoter. The chapter examines each category in detail to highlight the conflict that can occur between the 'quality' of the audience versus the quantity.

## **Promoter-generated publicity**

Although writing about club cultures, Thornton posits that club organisers aim to deliver a particular crowd to a specified venue on a given night, and that to a large degree, 'club crowds come pre-sorted and pre-selected' (Thornton 1995, p. 22). This definition could be applied to all promoters, however, who aim to attract the most appropriate audience for their given event through the design and distribution for that event. Promoters therefore seek to communicate a (musically and temporally) unique social and emotional musical experience in a (spatially and aesthetically) appropriate environment and participant structure to a (socially) optimum community of participants.

### ***Communicating the live music experience***

The temporal and spatial experience on offer is expressed by communicating the date, time, and location of the event to the potential audience, in this way suggesting the uniqueness of the event and subsequent sense of occasion (Cohen 1991). Even events that take place on a weekly basis are temporally and socially unique. The aesthetic environment can be described explicitly or implicitly, based on an audience's prior knowledge of the particular venue, similar events, or through direct reference to

aesthetic devices such as the use of lasers, lightshow, or other spectacular devices.<sup>83</sup> The use of the internet by venues and promoters has meant that venues such as The Sage Gateshead and London's Heaven nightclub are now able to offer virtual tours of their spaces, allowing potential customers the opportunity to choose whether to attend based on whether the venue corresponds to the type of environment that they wish to experience the artist or event within. The parameters of possible participation on offer can be indicated through information about ticket types and prices. A fully allocated show, for example, may have a division of price bands, indicating that the event will be seated and therefore indicating both the limits on the audience's physical participation and the participant structure within the event.

The social and emotional experience sought by participants is a more abstract concept for a promoter to communicate. Again, this relies (to an extent) on an audience's prior knowledge of similar events (perhaps by including imagery from them), or may be indicated by information about the participant structure or as to the type (and price) of intoxicants on offer. Similarly, the emotional experience can be problematic to convey, although some promoters are explicit in their discourse about this. Opera North, for example, sold its Spring 2010 production of Puccini's *La Bohème* with the line, 'If you haven't seen our *sell out* production yet, hurry to secure your seats and *bring tissues!*' (Opera North 2010, author's emphasis), thereby unambiguously suggesting both that the show has proved highly popular thus far, and that the customer experience will be an emotional one.

Promoters often raise one or more of the 'selling points' – musical, temporal, spatial, aesthetic, emotional or social – to the fore when publicising their events. For example, a symphony concert promoter will publish the musical programme in advance; the promoter of an all-night party will often focus on the temporal and spatial experience on offer; and a folk session on the musical and social experience. In this way, the promoter suggests Frith's set of musical discourses (1996) by foregrounding one or more elements of importance to those seeking an experience within said discourse. For the 'art

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<sup>83</sup> In a memorable production of Bizet's *Carmen* I attended in Sheffield, promoted by Ellen Kent, the poster contained an image of a rearing horse, and the production did indeed include a (non-rearing) horse.

discourse', the emphasis is on talent, music, and emotional engagement; the 'folk discourse' is focused on musical and social values; while the 'pop discourse' focuses on fun, both socially and musically. The discourse can be communicated via the design and distribution of an event by the promoter, as is now explored.

## ***Design***

'Traditional' publicity materials include flyers, posters, and mailshots (direct mail); two-dimensional visual and lexical pieces that aim to translate a multi-sensory experience. As Gary Prestwich, marketing officer for St George's Bristol, explained:-

This is one of the things about live music – in a way that even more so than recorded music is – is that obviously you're trying to sell an aural experience but you're trying to do it in terms of words and images ... So it's how do you translate that? How do you translate what you hear and feel when you actually *listen* to live music into something that's kind of words and images? (Prestwich 2009, emphasis in original).

Promoters therefore deal in the world of semiotics, using – albeit probably unknowingly – Peirce's three types of sign – 'index', 'icon' and 'symbol' (1867, from Turino 2008, pp. 5-11) – to express a multi-sensory physical experience to a potential audience. Iconic signs are those which use a direct resemblance between sign and object and would include the use of imagery of an artist or of a previous event in the design of publicity material. Indexical signs are those created by 'experiencing the sign and the object together' (ibid., p. 8), therefore the promoter attempts to draw on the audience's past experiences of similar events in order to create associative connections; indexes rely on a person's familiarity with the (genre) culture. Symbolic signs are those connected to their objects through 'linguistic definition' (ibid., p. 10), hence promoters use certain words associated with certain artists, genres, or experiences. To illustrate this, Bristol-based psy-trance promoter Tribe of Frog, for example, uses a combination of Peirce's three types of sign on its flyers in the following ways. Iconic signs include the use of imagery from previous events. Indexical connections are created by the use of fractal imagery and psychedelic colours on the flyers, to reflect both the (drug-enhanced) visual experience at the event and the genre frame in which it resides, harking back to the free love and psychedelic aesthetic of the late 1960s with which the trance genre identifies. Finally, symbolic signs

include the use of words and fonts on the flyer; hence '4 ultra-immersive UV environments' operates as a sign to indicate the colourful visual feast in store in the club.

### **Genre styles**

As suggested above, the design of publicity material also reflects the art world or musical discourse within which the event rests: its genre frame. The following subsection examines where such 'genre styles' originate. As Holt (2007, p. 20) suggests, ascertaining the geneses of genres – and therefore genre styles – is problematic but he posits that genres are founded in 'centre collectivities' and changed through 'further negotiations', both on a micro and a macro level. One theory is that the distinctive styles of promoters' publicity materials stem to an extent from record cover design, and there are certainly certain tropes used by promoters to indicate musical genres and types of event, understood indexically by the intended users.<sup>84</sup> Publicity for jazz events, for example, often still draws on the cool colours and black and white imagery of the influential Blue Note album covers, to show its 'edgy and cool' credentials. Genre styles may also reflect the colours and styles used by specific cultures, hence publicity for 'world music' events is driven by the vibrant colours of African, Indian, and Latin American art and dress, using fonts and imagery in a way to suggest dancing and free expression.<sup>85</sup> Classical music, with its focus on talent and training, tends to use imagery of the performing artists and their instruments, or alternatively, the composers themselves or classical paintings that sell a classical, masterful experience (Prestwich 2009). Rock and pop events may also use imagery of the artists, depending on the genre frame, and the fonts and imagery used may become part of the identity of the artist in much the same way that the chosen name of the artist or group allies the artist(s) to their identity (Cohen 1991, pp. 37-8). In this way, genre styles are perpetuated and codified by the promoters who use them, efficiently transmitting a 'cultural code' (Holt 2007, p. 22) through visual signs.

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<sup>84</sup> Indeed, research from Finland suggests that certain genres are associated with certain colours – for example, blue to blues music and black to metal – although the authors conclude that colour-genre mapping is culturally specific and problematic (Holm, Aaltonen and Siirtola 2009).

<sup>85</sup> The most common example of this is the ubiquitous use by reggae promoters of the 'red, gold and green' colours associated with Jamaican Rastafarianism.

The size and position of artists' names and logos in the design of the publicity material is also of interest as it reflects both the type of event and the status of the performers or participants. An event such as a festival, for instance, in which there is more than one performer, often sells itself on the headline artist(s). The position at the top of the bill, the font size and use of headliner's logo (as opposed to the generic festival font) shows their higher status. Club promoters use similar techniques for their events: the resident DJs will often have the smallest billing while the names of the guest artists/DJs will be more prominent. With all multi-artist event advertising, however, the logo of the event will usually be larger than or equivalently sized to that of the headline artist(s), illustrating the status of the event over the headliner and echoing the fact that festivals such as Glastonbury and T in the Park often sell out before the headliners or any artists have been announced (Frith 2007).

### ***Distribution***

Just as the publicity design needs to look and feel appropriate for the event, so too it should be distributed in the 'right' places for the genre frame of the intended audience, whether physically, virtually and/or via paid-for advertising in the media. As Hodkinson writes, information about the generic orientation and relative exclusivity of goth nights is transmitted 'in actual and virtual spaces frequented by the intended subcultural audience' (2002, pp. 88-9), hence as the following DIY promoter explained, 'We were kind of picky about where we'd [put posters up]. Places that we'd go ourselves or people that we knew would like that kind of thing – they're the only places we'd bother, really' (Goldthorpe 2008). In this way, the distribution – as well as the design – of publicity material is also of importance in attracting the optimum 'quality' audience to an event.

Publicity distribution can also be a costly business, however, hence promoters will not usually waste money on distributing to inappropriate areas or audiences. For the following venue manager/promoter, for instance:-

There are certain places where we don't put [flyers], because you know, you go round town and you see some of these shops, and they've got all the DJ nights advertised. And I mean, we pride ourselves on not having DJs on and all that sort of stuff, so we avoid putting stuff into those places (Wilson 2008).

In this instance, a live music-focused venue is deliberately distancing itself from DJ-focused venues, and hence distribution can act as another indexical sign. Certain types of distribution can be problematic, however. Outdoor postering in particular, especially if it is perceived to be illegal fly-posting, can cause conflict between promoters and local authorities (Frith *et al* 2010, pp. 15-6). Sheffield-based promoter Alan Deadman, for example, who was in his early sixties at the time, received an ASBO<sup>86</sup> for fly-posting in Sheffield for his events (Deadman 2008).

As well as differences in the distribution of publicity material within genre frames, there are differences in the size and scale of event, and the promotional model in use. 'Enthusiast' promoters, for example, tend to promote their events themselves, often flyering or postering for their own gig, and thereby using their own enthusiasm to sell the show. They may well have a closer relationship to their audiences as a result. 'State' or 'commercial' promoters, on the other hand, often use secondary intermediaries to act on their behalf – a necessity relating to the size and scale of the event – employing professional distributors or PR firms in order to target particular areas or audiences, whether distributing publicity material to external sites or via direct mail to previous customers. When I worked for Headcharge in Sheffield, for example, it was my responsibility to distribute all the publicity material for the monthly event. Opera North, on the other hand, employs the services of a number of regional distribution companies to do this on its behalf.

While many promoters target specific audiences, other promoters attempt to attract new audiences for their work and broaden their traditional audience base. 'State' promoters in particular are necessarily accountable to their funders for widening the socio-demographic make-up of their audiences due to remits of social inclusion and accessibility. Hence as Diggle states:-

The aim of arts marketing is to bring an appropriate number of people, drawn from the widest possible range of social background, economic condition and age, into an appropriate form of contact with the artist and, in so doing, to arrive at the best financial outcome that is compatible with the achievement of that aim (1994, p. 25).

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<sup>86</sup> Anti-Social Behaviour Order.

Reynolds (2008, p. 22), on the other hand, posits that ‘The promoter’s goal is simple: put bums/asses on seats’, which perhaps suggests that ‘commercial’ promoters think less about what kind of ‘bums’ those are than the arts marketers. However, all types of promoter must balance quantity and quality; promoters appeal to as wide a base as possible while also targeting specific audiences within their genre frame, discourse, or subculture. Even a company as large as Live Nation targets particular audiences, whether it be via fan clubs, previous attendance, link-ups with appropriate brands, or poster sites in locations that contain a particular demographic.

Paid-for advertising in local and national press (and, more recently, digital advertising) is another form of distribution within promoter-generated publicity. While many small-scale promoters may not advertise in this way, ‘strip ads’ – a long list of one particular promoter’s shows – are perceived as a ‘commercially accepted, acceptable front to agents’ (Angus 2009) or ‘advertising to the trade’, and, in this way, partly explains the otherwise seemingly superfluous advertisement of sold out shows (Duffett 2011). While promoters do not necessarily see the value of these adverts themselves, they transmit a professional ‘face’ (Goffman 1990) to the wider live music industries.

Advertising may also be in the form of a national advert – more costly but with wider distribution – and for a national tour, usually all the promoters on the tour will pay towards such advertising. Advertising in this way can be ‘profile-raising’ or ‘ticket-selling’. Leeds-based Opera North, for example, purchases advertising space in local and national publications either to sell the company as a brand (profile-raising) and to maintain its profile within the readership of a particular newspaper or magazine<sup>87</sup>; or to sell a particular event (ticket-selling), often nearer the time of that event, particularly if ticket sales are low. Hence promoters judge the level of extra publicity based on pre-sales (if tickets are sold in advance); if sales are low, more money and effort will be spent on trying to boost them, and vice versa. Edinburgh-based promoter Mark Mackie, for instance, explained that he checks advance ticket sales twice a week and uses the data to inform his decisions as to whether to spend on extra advertising: ‘So you say, “Right, The

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<sup>87</sup> Advertising campaigns are directed at newspapers with an opera-literate audience such as *The Sunday Times*; in location-specific publications such as *Leeds Guide* or the Leeds International Piano Competition season programme; or in genre-specific magazines like *Opera Now*.

Proclaimers in Inverness, that's brilliant, it's done what we wanted; let's not waste any more money" and "The B-52s: that's very disappointing" (Mackie 2008). In this way, the promoter balances the cost of the extra publicity against the potential for extra ticket sales.

### **Digital distribution**

Promoters increasingly rely on using the internet to promote their shows. Where once they spent money on direct mail, email and websites are becoming the cheap and favoured option.<sup>88</sup> However, while some promoters' websites are active and direct customers towards ticket purchase, the covert nature of many 'independent' promoters means that some major promoters' websites are oddly inactive,<sup>89</sup> relying instead on intermediary sites such as [www.gigsandtours.com](http://www.gigsandtours.com),<sup>90</sup> or instead linking directly to 'products' such as T in the Park in the case of DF Concerts. In this way, promoters may maintain a deliberately non-audience-facing 'business-to-business' presence on the internet; the promoter remains the behind-the-scenes service provider to the live music industries. 'Artist-affiliated' promoters simultaneously offer a product and a service to the consumer, therefore their websites are often more (inter)active.

While venues (and ticketing companies) have traditionally been the gatekeepers to their clientele's contact information via their ticketing facilities, promoters are increasingly building their own databases in order to communicate directly with past attendees. Digital marketing can be used to attract an audience already used to social segmentation and direct targeting in a way that the 'traditional' methods of postering and flyering were much less able to do, and, unlike postal direct mail, with the added benefit of zero or low cost. Live Nation, for instance, claims over eighty million opt-in email addresses ('assets') on its database (Live Nation 2010), which allows it to target attendees based on what

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<sup>88</sup> There are many promoters, however, who still prefer to use printed publicity materials as well as the internet, due to the relative ease of flicking through a paper copy without the necessity of using a computer (Johnson 2009; Prestwich 2009).

<sup>89</sup> See [www.metropolismusic.com](http://www.metropolismusic.com) or [www.dfconcerts.info](http://www.dfconcerts.info) for examples of websites that have seemingly been 'under construction' for the duration of my entire research period.

<sup>90</sup> [www.gigsandtours.com](http://www.gigsandtours.com) is a joint venture between SJM and Metropolis Music and acts as a ticket selling website for both themselves and affiliated promoters and events.

they have seen in the past. In this way, the promoter can 'own' assets in the form of mailing lists and databases and can sell these on to other parties, in line with data protection regulations. The danger with digital marketing, however, is the potential for overloading audiences by 'sending people millions of emails' (Donald 2010) from the venue, the promoter, the ticket agent, the artist, and the media. In this way, the promoter must strike a balance over the need for extra ticket sales with the need to avoid desensitising or even annoying potential audiences by the overuse of digital publicity.

However, as stated above, the promoter sometimes has little control of the publicity material once it has been released and therefore who receives it. The following subsection therefore discusses the ways in which a promoter can control the 'quality' of the audience at the event, namely via simultaneous production and publicity, and via the guestlist.

### ***Simultaneous production and publicity***

The previous sections referred to publicity carried out in advance of an event but promoters do not always rely solely on such advance publicity. Instead, the publicity and production of an event may be simultaneous in order to attract customers who had not pre-planned to attend. Hence some promoters may depend on an amount of 'passing trade' for certain types of event; often these are events that are temporally dynamic (not dependent on an exact start-time) or which take place in venues that are 'on-the-beaten-track'. At Fagan's in Sheffield, for example, the session host simultaneously publicises and produces the event by welcoming newcomers and inviting 'lurkers' to join the session, via musical, verbal and gestural signals. Sharrow Festival attracts a certain number of people who happen to be walking past, and Mr Wolfs in Bristol occasionally attracts customers who are searching for a late-night venue with which to continue their evening. Even though the venue is double-glazed in order to muffle sound leakage, one new attendee I spoke with had heard the music from afar, liked it, investigated further and stayed for a few hours. Simultaneous publicity and production can be problematic, however, as those who have spontaneously attended an event may not be *au fait* with the performative and behavioural expectations within if they have not been privy to the publicity material beforehand.

Conversely, promoters may deliberately choose to *detract* passing trade through the use of external and internal signs. As with the goth events described by Hodkinson (2002), promoters and venues are able to *discourage* the ‘wrong’ audience through the use of décor, lighting, and door staff; this negative ‘anti-promotion’ guarantees the type of audience they wish to attract. Hence ex-venue club owner Ben Dubuisson explained that although the venue was in the city centre and an unwelcome, drunken ‘townie’ crowd would pass by, they did not come in. This was due to a deliberate lack of overt advertising by the club, a door price, no offers on drinks, doormen who are not ‘towering meatheads who really enjoy violence’, deliberately dark ‘mood lighting’, and ‘underground’ music (Dubuisson 2009). As he explained:-

It’s not that you’re making it unfriendly – everyone’s welcome – but people will gravitate to what they feel comfortable with. You don’t *have* to tell them ‘You can’t come in’ ... If they come in and it’s not as glitzy and the drinks aren’t, you know, ‘What, you don’t do alcopops?!’ ‘No!’ They’ll just *go!* ... In our [field], it’s *much* more subtle ways of attracting the crowd you want (ibid., emphasis in original).

Similarly, King Tut’s deliberately constructs an ‘underground but not dirty’ image by keeping the lights low, having ‘cool’ but not standoffish staff, but also maintaining a high level of service while understanding that their average clientele do not want ‘the feeling of being in a Hilton Hotel’ (Coet 2009). In this way, although the promoter and/or venue could potentially make more financial profit by attracting a wider audience, the focus is instead on the ‘quality’ of the audience rather than the quantity. The following subsection now examines how the promoter is further able to construct an optimum audience via the guestlist.

### ***Guestlist***

The guestlist is a vital tool for the promoter: with it he or she can increase the social and cultural status of the event. While previous work on guestlists has focused on those in receipt of the coveted ‘guestie’ or free pass, describing them in often derogatory language (‘ligger’ or ‘blagger’ in Fonarow 2006, pp. 125-9), they have neglected the importance of the guestlist to those who control it: the promoters. All promoters use the guestlist tactically, inviting those who may already have *invested* capital in an event/organisation, and those who may *generate* capital for the event/organisation.

Guestlists are therefore constructed with a number of types of guest in mind: stakeholders; commentators; cultural ambassadors; colleagues; artists and staff; and friends and family (although guests may fit more than one category).

First, the stakeholders are those who, in one way or another, directly fund the organisation (for example, Board members, government and local authority figures, investors, and record label representatives). Their entry on the guestlist is therefore a matter of manners and entitlement. Second, promoters often invite members of the press or those who may comment on the event (Schechner 1993, p. 43) – journalists, photographers, and editors – because ‘if you get the good vibe going, then you sell a hell of a lot more seats’ (Reedijk 2009). Third, ‘cultural ambassadors’ are those influential community figures who are perceived to have (sub)cultural capital or who will ‘talk up’ the event to others. For example:-

There’s certain people, thinking tactically, that you want in your club. Phil Oakey from Human League is someone who sometimes pops down, so he’s someone who always goes on the guestlist ... I mean, that’s one of the criteria: if I’m playing someone’s records, they get in for free (Razor 2008).

Here, Phil Oakey is perceived as someone with certain social status who will lend some of his own symbolic capital to the event. This both increases the social status of the event and the likelihood that the event will be perceived as successful, thereby also assisting the promoter’s next event by creating a subsequent ‘buzz’. Promoters also invite colleagues – other promoters and industry personnel – in order to maintain vital networks but also, in some cases, to contribute to the ‘health’ of the wider scene. While working for Headcharge, for example, I was able to get free tickets to many club events in Sheffield; this was both because the promoters of those events knew that the favour would be returned if required, but also because they understood that I would be flyering at the end of the night. As long as my event did not negatively impact on theirs, there was a tacit understanding that the livelier the scene was in general, the better it would be for all involved. Finally, the artists themselves and any company staff are usually entitled to guestlist places, and friends and family of the promoter may also be invited.

Promoters face difficult decisions, however, when choosing who to include on the guestlist, and must balance the need to build social and cultural capital with certain

individuals or organisations with the inevitable (immediate) loss in economic capital caused by offering free tickets. Promoters must therefore attempt to keep the guestlist to a manageable size, and the maximum size of the guestlist is therefore dictated by the break-even point of the promoter (Hobson 2008). The size of the guestlist before an event, in terms of people asking for inclusion, can also be an indicator as to the success of the coming event, as 'you know almost in advance that if you have a very small guestlist it's going to be a poorly attended gig, you know, if nobody wants to scrounge in on the guestlist' (Deadman 2008).

Some promoters choose to sidestep issues around the guestlist by shunning it entirely, for economic and ideological reasons and for reasons of control. Hence DIY promoter of Glasgow's Cry Parrot events, Fielding Hope, explained that:-

We've all experienced, say, where one night we might get a bit tipsy and say, 'Let him in for free'. It just immediately spirals out of control, and I just like to stay away from it now. Because money's tight for us, and I think people have to appreciate that, that we're not making any money, so I guess it's only fair that we say no to guestlists (Hope 2010).

This stance has caused problems for Hope, however, as dealing with the expectations of the live music industries and associated press can be problematic, as the following statement illustrates: 'There was someone from *The Scotsman* coming [to a gig] and he hadn't been added to the guestlist and he wrote this massive letter saying how unprofessional it was' (ibid.). The guestlist, then, while a potential minefield for promoters, is also a powerful tool. If used sensibly and tactically, it can increase both the 'quantity' and the 'quality' of the attendees: beforehand by encouraging 'cultural ambassadorship' from those on it; during, by increasing the social and cultural capital of the participants in the event; and after, by informal word-of-mouth and more formal press coverage used by the promoter for subsequent events.

This section has examined the tools with which the promoter constructs an optimum community of participants for their event. However, as set out in the introduction to this chapter, while the promoter is ultimately responsible for publicising the show, at one and the same time they are reliant on a variety of other sources and hence necessarily relinquish an element of control over the means by which the event is publicised. Such secondary publicity can be advantageous in that it may be of no extra cost to the

promoter. However, while the promoter necessarily requires a large enough audience not to make a loss, for many promoters, the need to maintain a 'quality' audience may be an issue, and hence secondary distribution can sometimes be problematic because of the relative lack of control by the promoter. The following section therefore focuses on how a variety of actors – artists, venues, the media, audiences, and ticket agents – assist (or hinder) the promoter in publicising the event.

## **Artist-generated publicity**

Promoters may rely on artist-generated publicity almost as much as their own in order to try and sell a show. As with promoters, publicity distribution by artists is either at affinitative artists' events or in physical and virtual locations where potential attendees are likely to frequent. 'Traditional' artist-generated publicity can also be in the form of artist interviews relayed by the media, or advertising and publicity material as above, often paid for by a record label. In the same way that promoters in the past were limited to printed forms of publicity material, however, so too were artists. As Cohen (1991) shows, bands designed and distributed their own posters, wore clothing with the band name on, and sometimes just simply hung out in cafes and pubs as a band. One Sheffield-based DIY musician I interviewed recalled how he used to make posters 'with a Letraset and a ruler' but with the increased use of the internet, 'that seems *insane* now!' (Trout 2008, emphasis in original).

Increasingly, then, artists are able to access their fans (and potential fans) directly via the internet and build a relationship with their fan base that bypasses any cultural intermediaries (marketing departments, record labels or promoters, for example). For this reason, promoters may have limited control over artist-generated publicity as the event is mediated on their behalf directly from the artist to the audience. On the other hand, however, the direct relationship between artists and their audiences is potentially advantageous to the promoter who needs to sell tickets to the artist's show. An artist's website can therefore be of more use than the promoter's own website as it often has 'sticky' qualities that encourage fans to visit again and again. Mark Mackie of Regular Music, for example, explained that bands' websites 'are the best', because they can contain blogs, diaries, free downloads, exclusive news, priority ticket deals and other offers which 'builds up people's need or wish to visit and use the website' (Mackie 2008).

The Regular Music website, on the other hand, is simply a list of dates. However, as Jono West, ex-bassist of Bromheads Jacket pointed out, while the band's fans who were most active on the web forum were also the most likely to attend shows and purchase merchandise, 'it's a double-edged sword, isn't it? Because the internet also stops people buying any of your music ... Your music's made available but then no-one buys it' (West 2008). It should also be noted that internet sites can also be used to criticise artists (and promoters) and their work, hence the internet offers both advantages and disadvantages for artists, and hence for promoters.

## **Venue-generated publicity**

Venues with box offices are gatekeepers to previous attendees' contact information, and promoters without their own mailing lists (postal and online) rely on the data stored and owned by venues. This can be problematic because the venue has both data protection responsibilities and a need not to overload their audiences. At Glasgow's Concert Halls, for instance, the data is owned by the halls, and there are three levels of usage for this data within the laws of data protection: the Halls themselves; 'data partners' like the RSNO or the BBC SSO; and 'data hirers' like DF Concerts, who are charged by the Halls to send out an email or mailshot on their behalf (they do not have direct access to the data). A data hirer's access to potential customers is therefore necessarily mediated through the venue's marketing machine, and must be filtered through the images and format chosen by the venue.

Venues also have the added challenge of producing publicity material that combines all the events in a season (a single month, season, or year), containing all the shows promoted by a variety of organisations, including the venue itself. A season brochure is produced partly to save on costs and to avoid overwhelming amounts of publicity material, but also in order that a potential attendee may access all that season's events rather than being forcibly narrowed down to one genre or artist. A season brochure produced in this way can be problematic, however, for two reasons: size and breadth. Gary Prestwich (2009) explained that for St George's Bristol, the season brochure is a 'massive' eighty to ninety page booklet, which suits some people but not those who do not want to 'plough through' the entire brochure to find what they are interested in. Secondly, it needs to appeal to a wide demographic without alienating its core audience:

'It can't be wild and wacky and in your face because for every person it attracted, it would turn off somebody. It's kind of got to be everything to all people and that can be problematic' (ibid.).

As with other forms of publicity material, venue-generated publicity also uses semiotics to attract customers. In this way, venues align themselves both to particular art worlds and genre frames through the use of text and imagery. Textual analysis of word frequency from some of the case study venues' 'season brochures' highlights the emphasis placed on certain words or symbolic signs, and therefore focus, as shown in Table 8-1:-

**Table 8-1: Word frequency of words used in 'season brochures' at case study venues**

King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	St George's Bristol	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Mr Wolfs	Lakota
Band	Music	Music	Free	DJ
Album	Piano	New	DJ	Live
New	New	Concert	Music	Games Room
Music	Concert	Scottish	Live	Lasers
Rock	Sonata	Album	Night	Décor
Sound	Young	Band	New	Smoking
Like	World	BBC	Band	Food
Just	Great	Musical	Funk	Area

As can be seen, 'music' scores highly in the majority of the venues, emphasising their identities as music venues. For King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, then, the use of words such as 'band', 'album', 'new' and 'rock' clearly represents the venue's *raison d'être* as DF Concerts' 'platform venue' for brand new acts, closely aligned to the music industries (McGeachan 2010). St George's Bristol's classical music background is still represented in the word frequency table, with its more recent direction as a jazz and 'world music' venue appearing further down the list. The table illustrates Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's identity as a Scottish venue with links to the BBC, which hosts a range of genres. Mr Wolfs, on the other hand, emphasises the other selling points of the venue, such as 'free' [entry], 'DJ', 'funk' and 'night'. Likewise, Lakota's listings emphasise the features of the club

experience itself, with words such as ‘games room’, ‘lasers’ and ‘décor’.<sup>91</sup> An external promoter’s event is again filtered through these signs, and thus the promoter relinquishes some control over the design and distribution of publicity, and hence potentially the ‘quality’ and quantity of the audience.

As discussed in Chapter Six, then, venues and (particularly ‘external’) promoters can sometimes be in conflict. A venue using the ‘venue-as-promoter’ model has a high level of control over the representation of the venue and programme. Hence a venue like King Tut’s, which is only used by DF Concerts, can control the way the venue is promoted to the public. Venues using ‘space-for-hire’ and ‘venue-promoter-split’ models, however, have decreased control over the promotion of the venue and programme, as external promoters design and distribute their own publicity material which the venue may or may not consult over or verify with the promoter. On the other hand, the venue may misunderstand the event or artist being promoted by an external promoter and therefore unintentionally thwart their own attempts to sell the event by publicising it inappropriately or to an inappropriate audience. For example, Head of Sales and Marketing at Glasgow’s Concert Halls, Jane Donald, recalled making a ‘terrible mistake’ once for an externally promoted show where she wrote: “‘Come and dance! Dance in the aisles!’” when ‘it was just totally inappropriate for the music’ (Donald 2010). *All* venues have a vested interest, however, in attracting customers to a show as their income comes as much from the selling of subsidiaries (bar takings and catering revenue, although for some venues, the *music* is a subsidiary to the bar and catering revenue) as from the hire fee.

## **Media-generated publicity**

While promoters may spend money to advertise their shows across a variety of media, they also rely on coverage of their events by further secondary intermediaries, namely journalists in the ‘traditional’ media – TV, radio, press – and the online world – sites like Virtual Festivals, for example. Record label 4AD’s Head of Communications, Rich Walker, states that TV and radio are ‘far more powerful’ at selling music than the press, but that press is still an essential ingredient in a campaign, whether to sell an album or a tour

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<sup>91</sup> However, the publicity material for individual events at Lakota tends to list artists, genre, and record labels.

(Walker 2010). Paying for TV and radio advertising is beyond the means of many promoters, but the growth of festival coverage on the *BBC* and *Channel 4*, for example, has been at least partly responsible for the increase in festival attendance over the past decade and for repositioning festivals within the mainstream of British culture (Sawyer 2008). Like other forms of publicity, the internet has impacted massively on the 'traditional' press in the UK over the past decade, with magazine and newspaper circulations falling (Robinson 2010). Websites such as the US-based *Pitchfork* and *Drowned In Sound* are now seen as instant arbiters of taste in a way that the print version of the *NME*, with a small number of paid journalists and associated print costs, struggles to do (Rogers 2006). Promoters, artists and other intermediaries are also acutely aware of the need to provide 'extras' to their customers via the internet, such as behind-the-scenes footage (Walker 2010).

An indispensable and ultimately inexpensive means of publicity, however, is through the local and national press (and/or radio), as a 'free' preview for the promoter's show can save them a significant amount of financial outlay. Reviews are useful after the show for artists and audiences, to enhance the audience's recollection and encourage those who missed out to attend next time. For promoters, however, previews in the media are all-important because they are what sell the tickets before the show. As Sheffield-based promoter Stuart Basford explained:-

I always get a bit annoyed when people [journalists] ring me up for review tickets if they don't *preview* it, because that's worth nothing to me. A review is worth something to the artist and might be worth something on the *next* tour [but] I need previews as well. So really I need both. But a *preview* is more important than a review (Basford 2009, emphasis in original).

In this way, there may be conflict between promoters and other parties because of their necessarily different needs and expectations. Another source of conflict can be geographical. UK media tends to be London-centric – valueless to a Scottish-based promoter, for instance, unless for profile-raising – hence previews and reviews in local media are often more important to a local promoter than those in the national media. Basford again:-

The *local* papers are better than the nationals. The local papers here, both of them in Sheffield – the weekly *Telegraph* and the daily *Star* – they've been fantastic and you couldn't

live without them. They've saved me thousands and thousands of pounds in advertising, so they've been great (ibid., emphasis in original).

As well as previews, listings sections in local and national press are the bread and butter of media-generated publicity for promoters, and the elevation of an event to a coveted 'Pick of the week' in a publication such as the *Guardian Guide* can mean extra sales for a promoter's show. Subcultures may be products of media and commercial interests (Thornton 1995), but wider genre cultures are also constructed and perpetuated by the media, particularly in listings sections. The placement of events in listings sections can be problematic, however, due to disagreements about an artist's genre or appeal. Bristol-based journalist Tony Benjamin, for example, recalled that during an interview with Andy Gangadeen from live dance act The Bays, Gangadeen was most emphatic that even though they entirely improvise their music – "It's not jazz, it's improvised music" – they did not want to appear in the jazz section (Benjamin 2009). Benjamin replied, however, "Well, I'm going to put you in the jazz listings anyway because I think people who like jazz will get you, even if they don't like dance music" (ibid.). In this way, journalists are vital arbiters of taste – tastemakers – in mediating live music events to potential audiences, even in the digital age, and promoters and venues alike must develop and maintain relationships with these key figures. Secondary promotion via the media can be problematic, however, particularly if errors occur or the event is incorrectly positioned. Hence while the promoter at one and the same time relies on such secondary means of distribution, it can positively and/or negatively affect both the 'quality' and the quantity of attendees for the event.

## **Audience-generated publicity**

Audience-generated publicity, or 'buzz', can be the most elusive – but potentially most lucrative – form of publicity for a promoter. Indeed, Barlow and Shibli (2007) found that 'word of mouth' is often the means by which first-timers find out about new events. Some promoters and venues, such as Fagan's in Sheffield, rely predominantly on audience-generated publicity, which may consist of face-to-face word-of-mouth – 'Are you going to see such-and-such tonight?' – or increasingly nowadays, online word-of-mouth. As Edinburgh hip hop/dubstep promoter Rose Maclean explained:-

If there's people who are passionate about something, they'll tell all their friends about it. If you've got a DJ coming up who's quite niche but who's incredible at what they do but [who] people won't necessarily have heard of, you rely on those people to educate their friends about it, and get them to come along (Maclean 2008).

Buzz is particularly useful for a promoter because it means that the amount of money they spend on publicity can be reduced. For example, if there is a high level of buzz, all the promoter has to do is to put the tickets on sale and watch the show sell out (Charles 2004, pp. 174-5). If the buzz is low, the promoter has to spend more to attract an audience. As with requests for the guestlist, the level of buzz may be used as a measure of expected success by the promoter for certain types of event, as a promoter can build on this buzz for the next event they promote.

While promoters can have little control over whether an act will generate enough buzz to merit audience-generated promotion, some employ 'cultural ambassadors' to talk up the night for them, or, increasingly, may actively employ MySpace or Facebook users to generate a buzz online. For example, the London Electronic Dance Festival used social ticketing company, Fatsoma, to build a network of online reps, or 'brand ambassadors', to promote the festival to their friends and push the events virally in exchange for commission, allowing the promoter to reach a wider audience than would otherwise be possible (Masson 2010d). In return, these cultural ambassadors receive free tickets, social status through their association with the event, and some later go on to promote events themselves (Deadman 2008).

The rapid development of mobile phone and camera technology in the twenty-first century, alongside the growth of the internet, has meant that audience-generated publicity also includes digital photos and permitted and/or illicit sound and video recordings of artists' sets (Stanbridge 2010). Fan forums, social networking sites such as Twitter, and dedicated 'apps' such as SuperGlued, can now transmit the experience a potential attendee may have – albeit via a computer – including information about set lists and encores, costumes, set design, song arrangements, and video and audio output (Bennett 2011). Such 'taste-making' online communities (Wall and Dubber 2010) use digital media to persuade other fans to buy tickets for a show, or to increase fans' sense of anticipation about forthcoming events.

However, audience members who record shows in this way are acquiring more than simply an experience or purchasing a piece of merchandise. By recording the show, they are acquiring an asset in the form of a keepsake or memento which was perhaps not part of the initial ticket price. The acquisition of previously unattainable digital assets can have copyright implications, however, and conflicts may also occur between the expectations of the audience and the wishes of the artist, promoter and venue. On the one hand, some artists actively encourage the recording of shows; Kristin Hersh apparently 'doesn't give a shit' about fans taking photos or videoing at her gigs or copying her music as it encourages them to then attend her live shows (McBride 2009). On the other hand, some artists dislike the recording and distribution of 'unrepeatable' performances or worry that their audiences will be distracted by operating their camera or mobile phone. During the 2009 London Jazz Festival, for example, venue staff allegedly attempted to restrain the increasing number of fans using camera phones to record the performances of the musicians (Fordham 2009). As Fordham points out, however, 'Although [the stewards] often do this at the request of artists, they are nonetheless hampering a process likely to generate publicity for an underpublicised art form' (ibid.). Hence while the promoter relies on audience-generated publicity, there may be conflict between the wishes of the artist, the audience and the promoter, which may be difficult to control, before, during and after the event itself.

## **Ticket agent-generated publicity and ticket-selling**

The final section of this chapter addresses the importance of the ticket-seller as a secondary source of publicity for the promoter. The ticket agent is a key figure due to the extent of consumer awareness of such agents; some consumers find out about events from their preferred ticket agent rather than from other forms of promotion (Competition Commission 2010a, p. 92). In this way, as with other forms of secondary publicity, the relationship between promoter and ticket agent is vital in order to attract the 'right' audience for the event. Typically, the venue will be allocated between fifty and seventy-five per cent of the total capacity to sell tickets on behalf of the promoter, and the promoter then allocates the rest to ticket agents (Competition Commission 2010b, p. F11). The percentage set by the venue is not usually negotiable but in most cases, if a venue was failing to sell tickets, the promoter would be allowed to sell them via a ticket agent (ibid.). The venue may add on a booking fee or commission, which may be factored

in to the ticket price when the promoter sets it (Competition Commission 2010a, p. 13) and from which the promoter may take a share or 'kickback'. The relationship between promoter and ticket agent is also important, then, because this may constitute important secondary revenue for the promoter (and, in some cases, the artist as well).

The internet has revolutionised ticket selling in the UK, enabling promoters to sell a massive number of tickets to their audiences in a short space of time. Promoter Conal Dodds, who first started promoting in the early 1990s, recalled that when he first started, customers would buy a physical ticket from venues and local outlets, and that there were still postal applications for certain events. A later innovation was the use of telephone booking, which sped up the process; the majority of the 250,000 tickets for Oasis' Knebworth gig in 1995 were sold via telephone booking, for example. But, as Dodds went on to say:-

Obviously the internet now has just knocked that speed into nothing. You could literally – as long as your server can take it – you can sell thousands and thousands of tickets very very quickly. I mean, we sold out 500,000 tickets in one day for Oasis, and then SJM beat that later on by selling 650,000 tickets in a day for Take That! (Dodds 2010).

Mark Mackie (2008) reinforces the increased importance of the internet for promoters when selling tickets: 'It's funny how five years ago, or seven years ago, you know, five per cent of our tickets were on sale on the internet; nowadays it's ninety-five per cent, just about'. Online ticketing systems are not infallible, however. Indeed, Ticketmaster and other major ticket sellers' systems crashed on the morning of 29 October 2010 after the release of tickets for Take That's 2011 summer tour saw unprecedented demand, and the ticket agents 'struggled to cope with the sheer volume of people' (Youngs 2010).

The rapid increase in online ticket selling has also seen an increase in secondary ticket outlets such as Ticketmaster's GET ME IN!<sup>92</sup> and Viagogo, but also an increase in scams over concert and festival tickets (see for example Atkinson 2009; 'London ticket agencies

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<sup>92</sup> Although beyond the scope of this thesis, the merger of the world's largest promoter, Live Nation, and the world's largest ticket company, Ticketmaster, is also of interest; the merger was passed in the UK by the Competition Commission in May 2010 (Masson 2010b).

...’ 2010). Debate over secondary ticketing hinges around the definition of what a ticket is and who therefore owns it once it has been purchased. As Diggle (1994, p. 235) states:-

The ticket is more than just a piece of paper with printing, more than just a receipt; at the time of purchase it is the product, it is something tangible, something to acquire in order to guarantee a future experience.

Frith *et al* (2010, pp. 19-21) explain that while the Concert Promoters Association (CPA) views tickets as an ‘entitlement granted under certain conditions’, secondary ticketing agents see tickets as pieces of property that can be sold on. Graham Howell of Bristol’s Colston Hall (2010) agreed that a ticket buys access to an experience, but argued that in a free market economy, a concert ticket bought on the secondary market is a commodity no different to buying a second hand car and that there is ‘a legitimate desire to buy tickets and then get rid of them’. However, on the back of many tickets it clearly states that the ticket is the property of the *promoter*,<sup>93</sup> which would suggest that a ticket is different to a second hand car, as the original owner or manufacturer of the car would not claim to still own the car once it is sold on.

The CPA lobbied the UK government in 2007/8 about ticket touting on behalf of its members, but there was apparently no appetite in government to legislate on concert tickets and the government contended that live music promotion was a free market economy that did not require government intervention (see Frith *et al* 2010). This appears somewhat paradoxical, however, given that the sale of football tickets has been legislated and regulated, albeit as a result of necessary crowd segregation. Again, the sale of tickets in an unregulated market further decreases the control the promoter has over the audience they are attempting to attract, although as Howell suggests, promoters’ dislike of secondary ticketing may be more straightforward:-

The problem that promoters have with the secondary ticketing market is that they’re not getting a percentage of the deal. That’s *their* problem. Their problem is not that there’s a secondary ticketing market, the problem is that they can’t monetise that (Howell 2010, emphasis in original).

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<sup>93</sup> It should be pointed out that at the time of writing, it is doubtful that the claim on the ticket backs has any legal basis, however.

As with any new technology, however, the true impact of the internet (and the associated commission fees) on live music as regards ticket selling remains to be seen. As shown by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT 2005) and Beaven and Laws (2007), customers resent added extras such as (primary and secondary) ticket agent fees, hence as Mark Mackie warns:-

If you start ruining the punters' experience, they will go less. If you charge them too much booking fees, car parking charges, whatever it is, five pounds a pint. The whole thing has to be a good night out, and if the punter feels they've been *cheated* in some way, they'll come less (Mackie 2008, emphasis in original).

In this way, as was shown in Chapter Six, in publicising and selling tickets, the promoter's role is to convince the various parties involved of the fairness of the live music event: that the artist's fee is fair, as is the venue hire fee, as is the cost of the ticket for the audience. As the publicity stage is the point at which the product is 'released' to the audience, this is the point at which the promoter will ascertain whether they have been successful in communicating the legitimacy of their decisions to the consumers.

## Summary

This chapter has explored a variety of primary and secondary methods used by the promoter in order to attract and sell tickets to the optimum community of participants for their event. What it has also shown is that while the promoter has the overall responsibility for the publicising of the event, he or she is also reliant on a number of other parties to attract an audience: the artist, the venue, the media, the audience, and the ticket agent (if used). Hence the promoter necessarily compromises their overall control of the event with the need to rely on others to help the event get publicised.

Promoters act as 'social enablers' for the participants in the event; they match artist to venue and audience and facilitate a complex conjoining of human and physical elements. However, this chapter has also shown that there may be a conflict between the quantity of people the promoter needs in the venue in order to break even and/or maintain status and face, and the 'quality' of those people. On the one hand, then, by publicising the show and selling tickets, the promoter needs as many people as possible to come to their event in order not to make a loss, but on the other hand, may need to attract the 'right'

audience. Socially, it makes sense to avoid disasters in terms of the juxtaposition of opposing groups, and, as shown in previous chapters, the safety of the participants should not be compromised by the promoter's drive to profit. Economically, it makes no sense to publicise the event to those who have no interest in attending. Furthermore, if the promoter gets it wrong, they risk losing 'face' among their colleagues within the live music sector.

This chapter has discussed the promoter's decisions in the publicity stage as concerns the assembly of an optimum community of participants; the next chapter examines how the promoter manages such participants. Once the show has been publicised and the tickets sold (if used), the promoter must then commence with producing the show, both frontstage and backstage.

# Part Three: Chapter Nine: Producing the live music event

## Introduction

The previous chapters have shown the promoter as a competitive risk-taker who is nevertheless dependent on relationships with a number of other figures in order to carry out their work. It has shown that the promoter sets the parameters for the event in the planning and publicity stages, and yet is also constrained by a number of external parameters as set by the state and other forces. The final chapter examines the event itself; the culmination of the work of the promoter as shown throughout this thesis. Unlike a physical product such as an album, the live music event is dependent on the successful combination of a variety of physical and human elements that have to come together *at a specific place and time*. The relative unpredictability of these elements, compounded by the relative unpredictability of external factors such as the weather, can make the role of the promoter incredibly complex. This chapter also shows that while the promoter has the overall responsibility for the live music event, their role in producing the event is both variable and necessarily covert, as was also discussed in Chapter Four.

To unpack this, the chapter is in four parts. First, the chapter examines the role of the promoter at the event itself to show that it can vary from being relatively 'hands on' to relatively distant. Second, the chapter highlights the cooptness of the promoter's role by examining the means by which the dynamic modifiers within the event may be managed, either directly or indirectly by the promoter and other backstage crew. Third, the chapter illustrates the complexities involved in the production of the event by investigating what can go wrong. Finally, the chapter examines the aftermath of the concert, the evaluation and payment, to show that even though the show is over, the promoter's work is still not finished.

## The role of the promoter at the live music event

To reiterate a point made in the literature review and in Chapter Five, the promoter is defined by the state as the 'occupier', the person charged with the 'duty of care' for the safety of the participants (HSE 1999, p. 185). The role of the promoter in producing the

event is therefore twofold as their responsibilities are to both the artist (producer) and to the audience (consumer). Hence their position is necessarily both front- and backstage and so a promoter may move from what Goffman (1990, p. 231) deems the 'back region' to the 'front region' and back again, depending on the size and scale of the event in question. As Dave McGeachan, senior promoter for DF Concerts, explained:-

If you've got ten thousand people at the SECC, you're responsible, you know, for ten thousand people – along with the venue as well, obviously; there's many people involved – but as a promoter, you're hiring that venue and putting ten thousand people into a room and being responsible for them all, and being responsible for the way the band act or behave, etc. as well; I suppose the way the *customers* behave as well (McGeachan 2010, emphasis in original).

Producing the event can therefore be the most complex of the promoters' duties: an event is a dynamic conjoining of individuals within a number of 'worlds' and is the fruition of the decisions made by the promoter in the planning and publicity stages. Thus the promoter's role at the event itself is to event manage or oversee the event – 'to pull everything together that has been done for me' (Mackie 2008) – and to facilitate the operational and economic transactions (if required) between producers and consumers in order that the live music event can take place.

However, as shown in previous chapters, the promoter may not even attend the show at all and therein lies the paradox: that while the production of the event is the culmination of the promotional process, the promoter may not even be there. While an 'enthusiast' promoter at a small-scale live music event will often take on the responsibility for artist and audience simultaneously, a 'commercial' promoter at an arena-scale show will usually have a promoter's representative or 'rep' to do this for them, leaving them free to carry out their two main responsibilities at the show (if they attend): the financial settlement and informal networking with backstage personnel. The promoter or their 'rep' also does not necessarily deal with the public because they are in the background, not the foreground of the show, and will often only deal with the audience if there is a problem (Francis 2009).

As the size, scale and complexity of an event increases, however, so too the direct involvement of the promoter in difficult situations generally decreases. With a site the

size of Glastonbury Festival, for instance, it would obviously be impossible for promoters Michael and Emily Eavis to be aware of – or attempt to deal with – every problem that occurs onsite and they therefore rely on intermediaries such as security, stage managers, and other crew. At smaller events, a promoter can be responsible for many roles – greeter, box office, security, artist liaison, etc. – and in doing so is able to control these aspects, although not delegating may cause further problems when they are unable to be in two places at once when problems occur. Before the show begins, the size and scale of the show again dictates how involved the promoter is in the technical liaison and show set up; from being a hands-on part of the ‘load in’<sup>94</sup> to employing others to do so. Obviously once the show starts, the responsibility for the enjoyment of the participants lies predominantly with artist and audience, but it is argued that the promoter’s decisions and actions regarding the production of the show also affect participant behaviour and hence their experience, as is now explored.

## **The live music event: dynamic modifiers of behaviour**

The live music event is now explored through the prism of dynamic modifiers of behaviour, as set out in Chapter Seven, to illustrate how the promoter oversees a variety of factors within the event itself, directly or indirectly. As stated above, the live music event is a spatially and temporally specific conjoining of relatively unpredictable human elements. Hence the promoter (and/or venue) needs to control or manage a number of dynamic modifiers of behaviour. Dynamic modifiers, unlike the background modifiers discussed in Chapter Seven, are elements within the event which change throughout its duration and derive from six sources: music; artists; audience; the use of (il)legal drugs; event personnel; and dynamic aural and visual signals.

Participants’ behaviour and experience are affected by the music itself, in terms of genre, rhythm, volume, length, and tempo (Clarke 2003, pp. 120-1). Promoters have varying influence on the actual music at the event, however, as was discussed in Chapter Six, depending on their promotional model (Brennan and Webster 2011), relationship to the artist, and, to an extent, the size and scale of the event. Audiences recognise the importance of the artist in influencing audience behaviour, and a range of mimetic

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<sup>94</sup> The ‘load in’ (or ‘get in’) can include the installation and testing of sound and light equipment, stages, seating, setting up of décor, etc., before the sound check, if required.

behaviours and covert and overt signals between participants in the event were observed (see Thompson, Graham and Russo 2005) across a wide range of genres observed at the case study venues. The behaviour of other audience members also has a significant impact on the behaviour of participants, especially if they are unfamiliar with the environment. The use of legal and illegal drugs, as was discussed in Chapter Seven, also affects participant behaviour (Cohen 1991; Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Reynolds 2009). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these dynamic modifiers in more depth, the following subsections illustrate the means by which the promoter is able to manage – directly or indirectly – the behaviour of the audience via event personnel and aural and visual signals. This highlights the promoter's often covert role in the production of the live music event as these are often managed or controlled by the promoter and/or other backstage crew.

### ***Event personnel***

First impressions matter and promoters are aware that a positive (or negative) experience with front of house personnel can impact on the overall attendee experience. The semiotics of the front of house staff or security personnel can indicate both the type of event inside the venue and the type of behaviour expected by the attendees. As briefly discussed in a previous chapter, 'towering meatheads' indicate a certain expectation of behaviour which is semiotically different from that indicated by a middle-aged lady with a name-badge. Even the semantics of security personnel have a bearing on how a promoter or venue perceives the expected behaviour of their clientele – 'bouncer' suggests physicality and even violence, whereas 'security personnel' or 'stewards' suggest something less threatening.

Differences in front of house personnel were apparent across my case study venues, and even within the same venue for different events. This is partly due to audience expectations and partly due to the levels of policing required at different events. For example, at Glasgow's SECC, the security firm G4S are contracted to provide security personnel for all music events at the venue, but their dress and audience handling are different for certain types of event. If the event is specified as a 'theatre-going audience' on their briefing sheets, G4S staff wear smart blue livery and ties and show audience members to their seats. For events that do not specify the audience type in this way, or if

the event contains a standing arena, the staff dress less formally and, even if there are seats, do not show audience members to them. At a Stereophonics gig at Glasgow's SECC in March 2010, for example, there was a standing area and higher levels of alcohol consumption and disorderly behaviour, hence the security staff wore bulky fluorescent jackets to increase their visibility, thereby signalling their presence to audience members to warn against misbehaviour. The briefing sheet mentioned above is issued by G4S on behalf of the promoter and the venue, therefore the promoter can directly influence the conduct of the event personnel and hence audience behaviour. As Glasgow's Concert Hall's Senior Customer Service Manager Gordon Hodge explained:-

We can speak to the promoters and say 'What do you want us to do if people stand, if people dance?' And they will say, 'No, I want everybody sitting down', or, 'I don't really mind, but I don't want anybody standing in front of the stage and I don't want anybody dancing in the aisles, so if you can watch that for us. I don't want anybody standing near the mixer position'. But for [the] Here Come the Girls [show in December 2009, featuring Lulu, Anastacia, and Chaka Khan] they were like, 'They're going to stand and dance so as long as they're not doing anything unsafe, then that's fine' (Hodge 2009).

Hence promoters may be prescriptive in how they want audiences to behave and how venue staff should deal with inappropriate behaviour.

The quantity and type of event personnel are also related to genre frames and associated conventions and expectations of participant behaviour by the promoter and/or venue staff. For example, Matt Otridge of Bristol's The Croft venue explained that he can generalise between behaviours of people related to the genre of music at the venue on a given evening. Hence, for drum&bass or hip hop events, 'where you know that there's more likely to be trouble', he ensures that there is extra security on the door (Otridge 2009). He added that, 'the stuff like metal and punk and hardcore, which people might think of as being quite an aggressive music, we don't even put security on because there's never any problems, and if there are, then people tend to sort of regulate themselves, really' (ibid.). The differences between front of house personnel at various types of venue and event are perhaps indicative of a mistrust of behaviour by authorities that is often associated with young people and particular genres (see Small 1998, p. 46), but problems also arise when audiences with different expectations of behaviour clash and when drugs – particularly alcohol – are involved, as is discussed later in this chapter.

If an audience is behaving in a manner deemed inappropriate or unsafe, the promoter and/or their intermediaries have the power to stop the show entirely. It is often the promoter who is ultimately liable for any problems caused by dangerous artist or audience behaviour, and 'independent' promoters (and venues) will often have public liability insurance to protect them, particularly for larger events (MacCalman 2009). Large-scale events have a variety of checks and balances in place to quickly control inflammatory situations, including the 'show stop button'. This is a means for those on stage to communicate to the front of house mixing desk that there is a problem. If pressed by (usually onstage) security personnel, the front of house engineer cuts the sound, in order that the problem can be remedied. I experienced a show stop at an Arctic Monkeys gig at the SECC in November 2009 when people in the crowd near the front kept falling over; the show had to be stopped five times in order that the security could wait for them to get back up again (J. Thompson 2010). At one point, the head of security asked front man Alex Turner to explain moshing (or pit) 'etiquette' (Ambrose 2001, pp. 3-4) to the crowd: 'We keep getting stopped, in case you're curious, because a lot of people are getting crushed. So look out for each other and help each other up if they fall over' (Turner 2009). In this way, the artist acted as the mouthpiece for those working behind the scenes to ensure the crowd's safety, illustrating that, for an amplified concert at least, the backstage crew are partly responsible for the experience and behaviour of the audience. At smaller events, the promoter (or their representative) may become involved in this way. External factors may also cause an event to be stopped or to finish early, as is discussed later in the chapter.

### ***Visual signage***

Another means for covertly controlling or managing participant behaviour is via dynamic visual signage such as lighting and live video playback screens, for which the promoter either takes a passive or more active role in both design and operation. Lighting is one important means of framing a performance and highlighting where and what the focus of the event should be; lighting design should complement live music events by highlighting the elements that are most important to the type of show and its genre frame (Cunningham 1999, p. 22). At a 'presentational' live music event, then, the lighting will often be merely functional, focused on the artists rather than the audience, highlighting the division between producers and consumers and focusing the audience's attention. A

'participatory event' on the other hand will usually have less of a separation between 'stage' and audience. At a 'presentational participatory event' such as a club night, the lights will be predominantly focused on the audience, but often clustered around the DJ booth or stage. At 'participatory presentational' events, participant observation showed that at some shows during the 'audience participation' sections (particularly 'sing-along' choruses), 'audience blinder' lights illuminate the crowd to indicate their expected participation.

Lighting can also be genre-specific. Whereas at 'rock' type gigs the house lights are usually switched off, conventions for classical music events, for instance, include dimming the house lights so that audience members can read their programmes. To offer another example, a technician at Bristol's Lakota nightclub explained that dubstep and drum&bass events use minimal lighting, whereas techno/trance events use lasers and flashing lights. This is due to performative expectations relating to the genre of music and also to enhance the type of drugs people consume for different genres. For example, Bristol's slow and wonky dubstep sound and scene is allegedly linked to the hallucinogenic horse tranquiliser, ketamine (Reynolds, 2009), while trance's frenetic beats and hippie sensibility is linked to the more euphoric stimulant, ecstasy.

The lighting of a venue can have a marked impact on the experience and behaviour of its participants. Mark Hobson, owner of Sheffield's Corporation rock venue is acutely aware of this fact and designed his venue's 'live room' to subtly 'force' people to enter. The entrance to the room can be changed via two roller shutters, one wide and one narrow; coupled with lighting effects, this can directly influence audience movement around the venue. Hobson explained that if the wide shutter is left closed, people are forced to walk through the smaller shutter to find out what is happening in the room. As more and more small groups of people filter into the room, it fills up, whereas if the wide shutter is open, 'They see it all immediately, [and] they won't go in there, not straightaway' (Hobson 2008). The lights in the room are then deliberately focused on the main section of the dancefloor so that the edges of the room are dark:-

They can see the lights at the front of the room [so] they've got to go in to see what's happening, right? ... There's no-one on the dancefloor, but they can't see around the edges – they've got to walk around there to see who's there ... They'll be in there for ten minutes, by which time you've had another few people in the door and the room starts filling up (ibid.).

The use of lighting also forms part of the starting and ending ritual at an event (Webster, in press), and the use of the houselights to indicate the temporal framing of the event was observed across all events in my case study venues. In this way, the dimming of the bright house lights indicates a separation between pre-liminal 'real life' and liminal musical event, while the brightening of the house lights indicates a return to post-liminal 'real life', which takes place in daylight, hence representing a 'false consciousness of time' (Debord 1992, p. 90). Many live music events therefore artificially recreate night-time (even during matinee performances) to frame the event as temporally distinct from daytime 'work' activities; darkness symbolises the times and places of restful recuperation, as well as those of restless hedonism, escape, and 'dark deeds' (Hadfield 2006, pp. 21-39).<sup>95</sup> This convention most likely derived from Wagnerian dramatic theory, as it was not until the opening of his Bayreuth Festspielhaus that the house lights were dimmed; prior to this, the lights had been left on the audience in order that they could continue to see and be seen (Forsyth 1985, p. 187).

Live action video screens, when used, are another form of visual signage and hence mediate the audience's focus (see Auslander 1999). Video screens, when used, show artists from a variety of angles, instantly edited but of a similar quality to watching an event such as Glastonbury Festival on a television at home. The use of video screens to mediate the visual experience is essential in large venues and outdoor festivals; for example, at one point during the Stereophonics gig at Glasgow's SECC arena, I attempted to watch the drummer without the aid of the screens but he was just too small. The editing of the video – along with the lighting design – may also be used to highlight the mood or tempo of a song; for example, during fast songs, editing transitions are often fast and cut quickly from camera to camera, whereas for slower songs, the different camera angles may be softly faded into the next shot. The use of video in this way sets up another level of mediation between the artist and the audience, whereby the camera crew and editing team make the decisions as to what to show and what not to show. The audience's focus is therefore mediated to an extent by those backstage in the video editing booth.

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<sup>95</sup> Outdoor events, of course, rely on and are dictated by natural light. Part of the reason for the coveted headline slot at a festival, for example, is in order that the artist benefits from the spectacle of the lighting show after dark.

## ***Aural signage***

As the Health and Safety Executive advises, crowd behaviour is affected by the provision of information (HSE 1999), but unlike static visual signage, aural signage is inherently more dynamic and effective. While visual signage is spatially fixed and can be overlooked or ignored by the audience, people cannot close their ears, and therefore aural signage is more immediate and less easy to ignore. Some venues use a public address system (PA) to make announcements front- and backstage, or promoters or event personnel may make announcements personally without amplification. Venues may also use a warning bell system to indicate the length of time until the performance begins, whereby three bells equal three minutes and so on. At the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, for instance, the stage manager makes an announcement over the PA when the auditorium is open, and then inserts a CD when there are fifteen minutes to go which has regular announcements at timed intervals as to the start of the show (Hodge 2009). If the venue needs to keep the interval very tightly to twenty minutes, the five minute call will go out at around twelve minutes before the show restarts because the venue is large and the audience need extra time to return to their seats. In this way, the venue deliberately creates Debord's 'false consciousness of time' by benignly fooling the audience. Other forms of aural signage include volume, background music and compères, but the following subsection focuses on the use of background music within the live music event to illustrate how this may be directly or indirectly controlled or managed by the promoter in order to influence the behaviour of the participants.

### **Background music**

Drawing on work by Forsyth and Cloonan (2008) on the strategic use of background music in Glasgow pubs to mould customers' behaviour, its use by the promoter and/or venue as a means of signalling to audiences about their behaviour is of particular interest (Frith *et al* 2010, p. 28). Jacob (2006) shows that both volume and style of background music affect consumer behaviour, and a comparison of different types of background music by Kämpfe, Sedlmeier and Renkewitz (2010) revealed that the tempo of the music influences the tempo of activities that are performed while being exposed to background music. As I have shown elsewhere in work on the encore ritual (Webster, *in press*), background music also forms part of the starting and ending rituals for a live music event. Different

venues and genre cultures use background music in different ways to reflect the discourse (Frith 1996) in which they exist, as is now examined.

The 'art' world's focus on a transcendent experience means that background music is often *not* used so as not to lessen the impact of the music both before and after the performance. Tracy Johnson of Sheffield-based chamber music promoters, Music in the Round, explained that: 'I can tell you that if you put background music on in the foyer of most classical music concerts, you will get requests to turn it off. We've had that across several venues ... It detracts from the performance, apparently' (Johnson 2009).<sup>96</sup> However, the starting ritual at many classical concerts includes the tuning up of the orchestra, a signal to the audience that the event is about to begin. Participant observation showed that there are often two distinct tuning up periods: one while the houselights are up and during which the audience continue to talk, and another when the houselights are dimmed, just before the entrance of the conductor; this dual (aural and visual) starting ritual signals that the audience should be quiet and attentive.

The use of background music at a 'pop' event is also ritualised. Background music is used to get people in the mood for the forthcoming event, usually chosen by the headline artist, promoter or sound engineer as appropriate to the genre of the artist about to appear on stage; some artists even have their own 'theme' songs which announce their imminent arrival. Paul Hepburn, resident sound engineer at King Tut's, explained that if the artist has not provided their own 'changeover CD', he uses an iPod plugged into the mixing desk that is filled with a variety of different styles of music which he then attempts to match to the first artist appearing at the event (Hepburn 2009). In this way, the background music prepares the audience for the music about to be performed. Just before the show is about to start and the background music has been turned off, the artists on stage may tune their instruments in a similar way to orchestral players to indicate to the audience that the gig is about to start; their starting ritual.

The background music used in conjunction with the turning on of the houselights after the gig signals the ending ritual, to encourage the audience to leave as soon as the show

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<sup>96</sup> The deliberate omission of background music at classical concerts is also linked to the non-amplified nature of many 'art' music events.

has finished. Hepburn described an ‘industry trick’, which is to use *inappropriate* exit music to move audiences more quickly out of the venue; for example, the use of Bruce Springsteen’s slow and melancholy ‘Streets of Philadelphia’ following a techno gig – what the sound engineer later described as ‘fuck off music’ (ibid.). Background music can also be used to give the opposite effect: to maintain the energy or atmosphere of the gig, particularly if there is a club night directly after the event. To illustrate this, the sound engineer at Bristol’s Mr Wolfs explained that the volume of the background music increases as the night progresses, and that for weekend nights he will manipulate both volume and speaker location to create a ‘party atmosphere’.

The ‘folk’ discourse is more variable on its use of background music, depending on the venue and type of event. At folk sessions in pubs where a jukebox is present, for example, the musical signal that the session is about to begin will see the jukebox music turned off, either within the entire venue, or in the room in which the music is taking place. In this way, there is a seamless switch between the social modes of listening; from the social use of background music to the participatory nature of the session. Folk musicians may also tune their instruments before a session or gig is about to start, to indicate that they are ready to play as an aural signal to gather those who want to be involved. At club events, the music, lights and décor create an immersive experience inside the venue, and the music is usually already playing before the doors open, which can often be heard by those in the queue to get them in the mood. Part of the excitement in ‘hunting’ free parties in the countryside comes when the music can be heard from afar, then lights glimpsed in the dark.

The use of background music by the promoter or venue can be contentious, however, as the artist sometimes has little control over what is played – often dependent on their status and/or the relationship between the venue and promoter – and whether it is appropriate for their event. When a promoter hires a venue, they have control of the auditorium but sometimes little or no control over the space outside the auditorium, or ‘external social zone’. For example, at a Metropolis-promoted Richard Hawley gig at Bristol’s Hippodrome in October 2009, within the auditorium the background music was appropriate to Hawley’s music – blues and The Beatles – controlled by the touring sound engineer. Outside the auditorium, however, in the bars and corridors surrounding the auditorium, the music included themes from upcoming shows, such as ‘Hi Ho, Hi Ho’ from

*Snow White* and the eponymous 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'. The venue at this point was owned and controlled by Live Nation, and the use of music in this context was used to advertise upcoming attractions at the theatre. After the show, the musicians were both surprised and amused to learn that the music outside the auditorium was somewhat inappropriate, but admitted that they had no control over what the venue operators played in this external social zone. For myself, as a member of the audience, it caused a somewhat surreal juxtaposition of two very different musical worlds, which jarred my sensibility as to the mood of Hawley's music.

While the above has shown how the promoter and other backstage staff may control participants' behaviour to an extent, the following section shows that while they may plan, publicise and produce the event to the best of their abilities, they may also face a variety of unexpected crises and catastrophes.

### **'The show must go on'**

As shown throughout this thesis, the promoter's role is to bring together a number of human and physical elements in a complex temporally and spatially located event. Hence the 'live' nature of their 'product' – the live music event – may impose challenges. The late delivery of a new album to record shops, say, can be problematic, but if just one element goes awry in the live music event, the entire show can founder. If the artist cancels, for instance, the show may have to be rearranged, which will have obvious ramifications for the artist themselves, the ticket-buying public, the venue, and hence the promoter. To avoid having to cancel the show, however, the promoter attempts to do everything possible in order that 'the show must go on'. This well-known phrase taken from the theatrical world is a concept applicable to many of the crises and catastrophes described in the following section. Goffman's concept of 'face' goes some way to explaining how this phenomenon operates, whereby 'performers, audience, and outsiders all utilise techniques for saving the show, whether by avoiding likely disruptions or by correcting for unavoids ones, or by making it possible for others to do so' (Goffman 1990, pp. 231-2). As Goffman shows, saving face is made possible by choosing members (artists, venues, backstage personnel) who are 'loyal, disciplined, and circumspect' and an audience that is 'tactful' (ibid.). Hence it is the construction of an optimum community of participants that can assist the promoter if disruptions occur; it is

the participants' collective will and the promoter's acquisition of social capital that enables events to happen even when facing adversity from all sides.

If an event is cancelled, both artist and audience face the disappointment of not being able to complete the social, emotional and economic transaction between them. In a sense, once the pre-liminal phase of the ritual has begun (ticket buying and dressing up by the audience; rehearsals by the artist), the non-enactment of the liminal and post-liminal phases seems somehow to be unthinkable, both socially and economically. The audience may or may not get their money back from the show,<sup>97</sup> and, depending on the type of contract, the artist may also make a loss. The promoter has also made both an emotional and a (usually) non-recuperable financial investment in the event; therefore for the promoter, the show must go on partly for practical and economic reasons. All of the elements of the show have been planned, publicised, and ready to produce, and, more pressingly, may have been paid for. Indeed, one (anonymised) promoter told me about the 'awful feeling' that he gets when, looking at poor ticket sales three weeks before a gig, he knows that he is going to make a loss, but also knows that he has to go ahead with the show anyway – even though he is losing money – and 'be nice' to everyone involved. As the following ex-venue manager explained, 'there's the school of thought that goes ... if you cancel a gig, it looks bad. And rather, sort of, put it on at a loss than cancel it' (Pearce 2008). To go on with the show is therefore also a matter of saving face and professional status with the promoter's valued colleagues within the live music sector, and therefore credibility and short- and long-term success.

Crises can and will occur, however, even if the promoter makes no mistakes and has attempted to create the most appropriate environment for an optimum community of participants. Regular Music's production manager Graeme Roberts stated that 'it's such a massive spectrum of potential things that can go wrong' (Roberts 2010), therefore in order to deal with such crises, promoters must necessarily be adaptable and resourceful (Brennan and Webster 2011). As Paul Hepburn of King Tut's explained:-

If something goes wrong, you try your best to fix it as quick as you possibly can, and if there's nothing you can do, there's nothing you can do. Work round about it and deal with what you've got. You've got to have a bit of a cool head to work in the live side of music; you've got

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<sup>97</sup> See 'Anger as snow-hit fans ...' (2010) for a particularly extreme example of this.

to be very very quick witted ... Brace for the worst even if it doesn't happen and have a plan just in case! (Hepburn 2009).

Crises relate to factors internal and external to the event taking place. Internally, problems may be around the components of Frith's (2008a) concept of a live music event, namely human (artist and audience) and physical elements (venue and technology). External problems include political, economic and environmental factors. The following subsections therefore explore the unavoidable disruptions a promoter may have to deal with in order to prevent the cancellation of their live music event, and how the successful maintenance of useful contacts and favours by the promoter can save the show.

### ***Human elements***

The promoter is the person charged with the duty of care for the safety of the participants at the live music event and therefore they are responsible for the human elements: artist, audience and, to an extent, staff. Some of the ways in which a promoter (or their intermediaries) can attempt to manage participant behaviour and avoid disruptions were discussed earlier in this chapter. However, crises relating to the human elements of the show can lead to failure for the promoter, and must be corrected in order to avoid cancellation, as is now explored.

#### **Artist**

The artist is one of the most important elements of the event – if not *the* most important – and therefore any disruptions caused by the artist can be a major problem for the promoter. Artists may not show up for the event at all, for instance, or turn up in an unfit state. DIY promoter Fielding Hope (2010), for example, had booked a band who were 'all off their faces on drugs' and whose amplifiers kept breaking, which led to a disastrous night for all involved. The illness of artists is another problem outside of promoters' direct control, but for which promoters should have contingency plans and/or insurance. U2's lead singer Bono's back injury in 2010, for example, led to the band pulling out of Glastonbury Festival, eventually replaced by Gorillaz ('Gorillaz replace ...' 2010). More tragically, however, the death of Michael Jackson in 2009 before a fifty-date residency at London's O<sub>2</sub> Arena meant that multi-national promoters AEG Live were looking to lose an estimated \$30 million of investment in the *This Is It* show, not including ticket refunds

(Masson 2009). Columbia Pictures were granted the right to make a film of the proceedings with the Jackson estate sharing ninety per cent of the profits with AEG Live. The film, 'This Is It', took £172 million at the box office worldwide and AEG Live recouped its losses (Goss 2010).

Conversely, poor ticket sales may lead to artists excusing themselves from a show under the (sometimes) *false* premise of being ill. One promoter told me (off the record) that tours may be cancelled if the artist feels 'under-loved'; allegedly artists may 'develop throat issues', leaving the promoter to try to find an obliging doctor to undertake a medical examination so that the insurance company will pay up and nobody loses money.

### **Audience**

While previous chapters showed that the promoter should attempt to assemble an optimum community of participants, any live music event necessarily contains parties with conflicting interests and/or expectations. Problems can therefore occur for a promoter if participants do not 'follow the rules'. Indeed, inappropriate behaviour by other audience members was one of the major complaints cited in the online survey, and is often the result of the juxtaposition of audience members with differing expectations from those expected within the genre frame or type of event. By way of illustration, a curious situation occurred at a gig as part of Sheffield's 2010 Tramlines Festival by Sheffield-based musician Neil McSweeney. McSweeney plays 'deeply felt, brooding songs rich in imagery' (Simpson 2007) whose music is 'usually watched by mature, respectful crowds by and large' (McSweeney 2010), namely at 'presentational' events. However, at this particular gig, where McSweeney was performing 'unplugged', a member of the audience mere inches from the performer at the front of the room took it upon himself to sing along loudly to every song and banter vociferously with McSweeney in-between songs. At a previous gig in another venue, the same man and two of his friends were energetically pogo-ing to McSweeney's songs, both examples of behaviour from 'participatory presentational' events. As McSweeney explained:-

Audience members attending a show have expectations beyond the music which extend to the conduct of the rest of the audience ... These guys confound that. They have been superimposed from a different context. They're not acting the role and it's like they've

wandered into the wrong gig. But they know all the words and sing along loudly so everyone can tell that it's no accident that they're there (ibid.).

What was particularly unclear at the 'unplugged' gig was whose responsibility it was to control the man's behaviour – the promoter, the artist, other audience members? In the end, nobody attempted to control him, which led to a sense of dissatisfaction among the rest of the audience. As McSweeney later pointed out, the balance between people wanting to be involved and to shape the experience for themselves, and people who perhaps more traditionally want passively (and quietly) to regard or witness the performance, can be problematic for both performers and promoters: 'The perfect crowd is quiet and loud in all the right places. So a great crowd really is mirroring the performance in a very perceptive and responsive way, supporting and enhancing what is going on on the stage' (ibid.).

A more dramatic incident took place in July 2009 at Sheffield's Sharrow Festival; a community festival in a municipal park in a multi-ethnic part of the city. The festival is divided into three arenas, and there is a very definite demographic difference between the main stage ('white hippy party people'), the community field (multi-culturally mixed, families), and the hip hop stage (multi-culturally mixed, young people). An unfortunate incident occurred at around 7pm when youngsters from the hip hop stage moved to the main stage area to watch a grime act perform, whereupon a man dressed in a multicoloured wig and Cyberdog-esque<sup>98</sup> fake body armour was allegedly pushed to the ground by someone at the front of the crowd. The police moved in and there was suddenly tension when groups of mostly Asian teenagers began milling around and shouting. Speaking to one of the festival organisers after the event, she explained that such flashpoints occur every year but that 'it's all just bravado' as a result of the local teens 'reclaiming' the main stage area for themselves (anonymised). While the police appeared to blame it on 'that bloody gangster rap stuff', the clash was just as much about the smoking, drinking 'white party crowd' taking over the local (often Muslim) youths' territory for the day, but the example is illustrative of what can occur when two or more very different types of people come together at a live music event.

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<sup>98</sup> Cyberdog is a brand that makes 'futuristic cyber styled' clothes, associated with trance/techno music.

Clashes between audience types or expectations can be even more extreme, however, and as Johnson and Cloonan state, the size and audience profile makes large rock festivals in particular a 'likely site' for violence (2008, p. 92). Indeed, there were a number of problems at festivals in 2010, including two rapes and a sexual assault at Suffolk's twenty-five thousand capacity Latitude Festival, and two rapes and an attempted murder at Scotland's eighty-five thousand capacity T in the Park festival (T. Thompson 2010). Participants can be particularly 'difficult' when alcohol or drugs are involved and the misuse of alcohol can cause problems for all participants in the event; such miscreants are often removed by security. A report into 'neighbourhood watch-style schemes' being set up at some UK festivals showed that some festival-goers believe that a major part of the problem is a changing demographic among those attending, with the music often taking a back seat to drinking and drug-taking (ibid.). One Camp Bestival and Latitude attendee posited that:-

The whole binge-drinking culture seems to have invaded the festival circuit ... A lot of festivals started out quite small, and as they've gotten larger, so the number of louts has increased. It's a real shame, and there's no doubt that for some people these problems are going to put them off ever coming again (quoted in ibid.).

In this way, as the capacity of the event increases and thus theoretically the promoter's financial profit, the tension between the promoter's need to balance quantity and 'quality' can clearly be seen. Increasing the capacity of festivals and broadening the demographic may therefore paradoxically have the opposite effect on the promoter's profits.

### ***Physical elements***

While the human elements of a live music event are relatively unpredictable, as shown above, the physical elements – venue and technology – should theoretically be less so. However, the following subsections show that this is not always the case, as venues and technological equipment may suffer unforeseen problems which often need to be dealt with by the promoter. Again, the necessity of combining all the required elements at a specific place and time means that problems relating to the physical elements within the event can be inconvenient, if not disastrous, even.

## Venue

While it is usually the responsibility of the venue for the maintenance and upkeep of the space and therefore for any problems that may occur, problems with the venue obviously have ramifications for the promoter. Problems within the venue may lead to a show being cancelled or moved to another venue, dependent on the promotional model (Brennan and Webster 2011) being used. King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, for instance, being adapted from a Georgian townhouse and suffering from old and unpredictable drains not designed to accommodate the thousands of people who use the venue every week, has intermittent problems with its drainage system, which can cause flooding. In 2007, The Cribs were performing in the upstairs venue when the downstairs bar started to flood and there was no choice but to evacuate the venue. King Tut's was the promoter of the event ('venue model') and staff were able to find a replacement venue – the nearby rival Admiral Bar – to relocate the gig to at short notice, as a result of the accumulation of both local knowledge and contacts (Francis 2009).

However, while the above illustrates problems that may occur inside venues, external ('independent' or 'artist-affiliated') promoters can also receive nasty shocks when venues are pulled at the last minute. During my time at Headcharge, for example, our venue was temporarily closed a few weeks before the event, leaving us to attach tiny stickers announcing the venue change on to ten thousand flyers. In another example, a Sheffield-based promoter was unlucky enough to have his venue pulled thirty-six hours before the gig because it was being used for the wake of a funeral. The promoter suddenly received a phone call two days before: "“Oh, by the way, forgot you were booked in, you can't have the club any more; we're using it for his wake”" (Razor 2008). Luckily the promoter was able to draw on his contacts within the Sheffield network and sourced another venue in time via another local promoter. The above examples illustrate that the venue is perhaps slightly easier to replace than the artist, but problems with the venue can still be a major inconvenience for the promoter, and will inevitably cost time and money to rectify.

## Technology

As shown in Chapter Seven, promoters either use their own equipment (sound and lights), use the venue's equipment, or the artist will use their own; the responsibility for

the maintenance of equipment therefore varies depending on the deal between the promoter, artist and venue. Mechanical and technological equipment is prone to breaking, however, either because it is poorly maintained, or because it develops a fault, sometimes caused by excessive heat or moisture in the air. One promoter recalled a live electronic gig in Holland where all the technology crashed, and the drummer had to keep 'battering away' on his V-Drums<sup>99</sup> for two and a half minutes while the promoter was desperately rebooting all the computers (Caldwell 2009). Another promoter told of one particularly hot and sweaty gig when one of the extraction fans broke, leaving technicians desperately fanning and blowing on the band's computer equipment to prevent it from overheating (Hobson 2008). Promoters must also act quickly if equipment they have hired does not turn up at all. One promoter recalled an instance where the security barrier he had ordered did not appear; he improvised quickly and asked the security to form a 'human barrier' in front of the stage so that the crowd did not crush themselves. As he added, 'I've had a few things where the PA or certain technical stuff is obviously not going to show up and then you have to panic and find someone else ... There've been a few moments like that, but you usually end up working it out' (anonymised).

### ***External crises***

Finally, while promoters may be able to deal with the relative unpredictability of the physical and human elements within the event, external crises relating to global politics, economics, and the weather further increase the complexity of the promoter's role, as was seen in Chapter Five in relation to the global financial crisis that began in 2008. Again, the necessity of assembling all the components for an event at a specific place and time mean that incidents external to the event can be problematic and require the promoter to react quickly. For example, Jill Rodger, Director of the Glasgow International Jazz Festival, explained that the terrorist attack at Glasgow Airport in June 2007 meant that musicians were trapped in the airport, diverted to Edinburgh Airport, or still at Heathrow, unable to catch their connecting flight. As she recalled:-

I don't want to have to do *that* again! ... We got some local bands to fill in. People were great; they obviously realised ... the *audiences* were great. There were American musicians who were – tour managers actually – weren't so good. Not at all. Some really horrible moments.

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<sup>99</sup> V-Drums is a digital drums set-up.

Until I actually sat one of them down in front of a TV screen and put it on and showed him and said, 'Look, you know, I can't get your drummer out of the airport; this is happening at the moment'. But he was screaming at me, absolutely: 'Get him here now for his soundcheck!' 'Well, you know, there are more important things that are happening!' (Rodger 2009, emphasis in original).

In this case, the promoter adapted quickly to the situation by drawing on her contacts within the city of Glasgow to ask local musicians to play, but was also assisted by a 'tactful' audience (Goffman 1990).

The relative unpredictability of the weather is another external factor of particular relevance to live music promoters, especially for those putting on outdoor shows. However, bad weather can cause people to stay at home and hence may also affect those promoting *indoor* shows. Recent examples of weather problems in the UK include the cancellation of the Truck Festival in 2007 ('Music festival off ...' 2007) and the Sunrise Celebration in 2008 due to 'adverse weather conditions' ('Sunrise Celebration ...' 2008). The cold January and December of 2010 meant that some tour dates were affected in the UK, some of which were postponed and rescheduled for a later date (see Masson and Cardew 2010). Hot weather conditions can also spell problems for promoters of outdoor shows as audiences may succumb to heatstroke or dehydration. The 'dry, uncompromising, and painfully affecting' heat of 2010's Glastonbury Festival led medics to treat over three thousand people for heatstroke, for example (Sharp 2010a). However, hot weather can also impact negatively on indoor events as audiences may not want to be inside a venue while the sun is shining. The HSE Event Safety Guide (1999) offers advice for promoters and concert organisers about weather conditions, advising them to check forecasts and to prepare for inclement weather by providing warm shelter, for example, all of which should be included in a risk assessment before the event.<sup>100</sup> In this way, the promoters' planning and production of a show should attempt to cover all bases in order for the show to go ahead. If the promoter successfully gets through the show, however, their final responsibility is to evaluate the event in order that they can go on to promote again, as is now examined.

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<sup>100</sup> It should be noted that, as of 2011, the Guide is in the process of being updated.

## The end of the show

Once the last note has sounded and the audience start to leave the venue, the work of the promoter has not yet finished. First, the event must be cleared up, whether this be simply clearing away empty glasses or dismantling a complicated stage set; the 'load out' or 'get out'. As with the 'get in', the promoter's role within this is highly variable. Second, there are the mundane practicalities of the financial settlement – accounting – which may also be carried out during or even before the show. Of particular interest are the time frames involved and the movement of money, whether physical or virtual, which often relate to the size and scale of the show. For instance, at Headcharge, there were no credit card bookings and advance tickets were paid for in cash. This was then added to the cash that came in at the box office and would go straight into marked envelopes and into the hands of the DJs, venue and crew on the night, with any profit left over for the promoters.

However, for a high-status artist on a guaranteed fee, cash transactions are often made 'virtually' and within very different time frames. Hence a 'virtual' payment may be made in advance, either to the agent or to the artist themselves, then a cash payment made on the day to cover expenses, and then the final balance after the event, also 'virtual'. For example, for an artist on a guarantee of £100,000, say, fifty per cent of the fee (£50,000) will be paid in advance to the agent by the promoter, and a cash advance of, say, ten per cent (£10,000) is paid to the tour manager on the day of the show to cover cash expenses such as local crew; this comes from the promoter's 'petty cash' (Roberts 2011). The balance after the show of £40,000 is now due, transferred by the promoter to the agent or the accountant. The money from ticket sales from the venue and/or ticket agent is often not paid to the promoter until after the event (*ibid.*), however, hence the promoter risks a significant financial outlay before any return. This further highlights the necessity of not cancelling the show as money has already changed hands and may be non-recuperable.

The promoter's accounting function therefore essentially involves evaluating whether their risk has paid off. As with the production of the show itself, however, the role of the promoter in the financial settlement process varies from taking a fully active part to employing others to do this on their behalf. For Mark Mackie of Regular Music, the

process involves taking receipts and balancing them against the ticket statement from the venue and/or ticket agent to create a spreadsheet showing income and expenditure:-

And then you'd sit down with the tour manager, and you'd go through every single line, 'OK, and there's ...' [points to imaginary spreadsheet] 'So we spent that on "humpers"',<sup>101</sup> and he'll go, 'That's fine', and we spent that on that, and he'll go, 'Oh that seems a bit high' and I'll go, 'That seems a bit high to me too, so hold on, we'll question that one' (Mackie 2008).

In this way, the promoter works through the expenses line by line to check whether they are in profit or in loss, and, depending on the deal, as shown in Figure 4-1, pays the artist, venue and other expenses accordingly and keeps any profit.<sup>102</sup> The promotional model used identified by Brennan and Webster (2011) further complicates such calculations as promoters using the 'venue model', for example, must also factor in bar sales and other revenue within the overall budget. In this way, the evaluation of an event may be known in advance (the promoter knows that ticket sales will or will not be enough to cover costs); during the event (as was the case with Headcharge, for example); or may not be fully understood until long after the show, particularly when dealing with a season of events as with Opera North.

### ***Measuring success***

A simple model of economic success for a promoter would be where revenue from tickets sold is greater than the cost of the event. However, more than one promoter interviewed stated that success for them was not simply judged by whether the event breaks even or makes a profit. For example, Mackie (2008) explained that:-

I suppose the worst ever gig should be the one you lost the most money on if you're a promoter, but I don't see it like that – I can lose money on a gig and still think it's fantastic.

An event at full capacity may indicate *financial* success, but the *quality* of the event also appears to be a major factor as to whether the event is deemed a success or not. Quality

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<sup>101</sup> 'Humpers' are (often local) crews of (often freelance) workers, who assist with the load-in and load-out, literally 'humping' equipment in and out of the venue.

<sup>102</sup> While difficult to prove, this may also be the point at which some promoters may attempt to 'massage' the figures to increase their profits (Jenner 2008).

may be judged by how much the participants enjoy themselves – the number of people who remain at the end of the event, for example – or who the event attracts and the ‘buzz’ afterwards, indicating social and cultural success. As the following ‘enthusiast’ promoter Rose Maclean, explained:-

I mean, obviously there’s going to be the financial element of, ‘I really must break even, otherwise I’m pretty fucked’. I did lose about a hundred pounds on [the event] which was a real shame, but the one thing that I will say was that I was *really* happy that we got so many people who are really into the Edinburgh hip hop scene (Maclean 2008, emphasis in original).

Of course, there are obvious differences between Mackie and Maclean here: the former being a full-time professional who can perhaps afford the odd loss here and there, while for the latter, a loss of a hundred pounds could mean the difference between success and failure on a relatively larger scale, or even a week’s rent.

The level of personal effort by the promoter can also correlate to the success of the event, and increased effort may sometimes be to avoid a sense of guilt in case of low attendance figures. Mackie went on to explain the ‘gut-wrenching’ feeling he gets when he knows he should have done more to promote an event:-

When a show’s not doing that well, you don’t give up on it – you *can’t*. Because you just have to throw everything, kitchen sink and everything else, and then on the night you can sit there with five hundred people on a Friday evening in a two thousand capacity venue, and you say, ‘I did all I could’. And that’s a good feeling! Whereas the other way round [where you know that you did not do all that you could] is just soul-destroying (Mackie 2008, emphasis in original).

Finally, as was examined in Chapter Six, the promoter must also attempt to build and maintain a long-term relationship with the artists and their representatives, and their audiences. Thus as Cluley shows, promoters evaluate the profits they secured from the gig not only financially, but also in terms of their respect and status in their local community and in the wider music community through social interactions (2009, p. 386). A more nuanced approach to how a promoter measures success could therefore be expressed by the successful accumulation of economic, social, and cultural capital, the quality of the event, and maximum effort expended by the promoter.

The promotion of live music, then, as with any business venture, involves constant evaluation: 'Can I afford this act?' 'Is this venue any good?' 'Why did nobody come to my last show?' As stated in Chapter Four, the evaluative element of the promotional process renders the promoter's role cyclical. Just as the promoter's decisions affect the success of a concert, so too the success of a concert affects the promoter's decisions in the future. In this way, the promoter secures their short- and long-term future in order to go on to promote again.

## Summary

This chapter has shown that the promoter's role during the production stage is the most complex part of the promotion process due to the temporally and spatially specific nature of the live music event. If problems occur at other points in the promotion process – the publicity material turns up a day late, say, or the tickets go on sale too early – these are rectifiable, albeit inconvenient. The show itself, however, relies on the successful conjoining of both physical and human elements by the promoter – artist, audience, venue, and technology – in order for it to work, and the promoter attempts to do everything possible in order to avoid cancellation, even when faced with crisis.

However, the promoter's role in the production stage is also highly variable, the paradox being that the promoter's role itself may be relatively distant and mediated on their behalf by other parties. As the size and scale of the show increases, the promoter's role becomes purely economic, while at a smaller show, the promoter may be fully 'hands on'. What the chapter has also shown is that while the promoter has the overall responsibility for the event, backstage and frontstage, the promoter may also be reliant on a number of other parties in order to run the show on their behalf, who are able to manage and manipulate participant behaviour through a variety of means. Finally, the chapter has shown that the promoter's role does not end once the show has finished, and essentially involves evaluating whether the risk for the promoter has paid off. In this way, the thesis comes full circle back to the notions of risk as discussed in Chapter Four and leads the reader into the concluding chapter, where the aims of the thesis are revisited and the main findings discussed.

# Chapter Ten: Conclusions

## Introduction

This thesis has provided the first PhD-length critical examination of the work of promoters in the UK in the contemporary period. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to provide a reflective review of what has been achieved within this study. The structure of the final chapter is as follows. First, the main contributions and findings are discussed to highlight the importance of the research and to reiterate what has been ascertained about the practices of and constraints on live music promoters. The second part of the chapter then reflects both upon the findings of the study and the research approach, and the thesis concludes with some suggestions for future research.

## Main contributions

As far as I am aware, there is no other existing academic work like this on live music promoters in the UK or beyond. Prior to this research, then, an understanding of just how important promoters are to artists' and audiences' understandings of and experiences at live music events was missing. In cases where promoters *have* been written about, previous commentators failed to address their importance or wrote about them in a clichéd manner as, for example, 'aggressive wheeler dealers' (Negus 1992, p. 130). However, as Frith and Cloonan (n.d.) argue, to understand live music from the promoter's perspective is to get a better understanding of people's experiences of live music and the contemporary music industries as a whole. This study has therefore generated a new body of knowledge around two areas that were previously woefully under-researched: promoters of live music, and live music in general. In this way, it has provided the groundwork for future scholars in this area and has filled a gap in the understanding of live music.

In doing so, the thesis has gone some way to shift the academic focus from the recording industries to the live music industries, but also away from the foci within Popular Music Studies on the recorded medium and the 'artist-as-auteur'. Returning to Becker's contention that works of art are not the products of 'individual makers', but are rather 'joint products' of all the people within a cooperative network who bring the art work to

fruition (1982, pp. 34-5), questions must be raised as to what Popular Music Studies texts would look like taking account of promoters and other backstage crew as well as artists and audiences. For example, work on gender and rock music would look very different, perhaps, if it addressed the influence of the male-dominated world of live music promotion. The identification of a number of 'key moments in the evolution of rock 'n' roll' (Inglis 2006, p. xv) and their contexts and consequences would also perhaps look very different if taking into account not only the performers, but also the influence (if any) of promoters on such performances.

However, academic interest in live music has already been growing since the live music project began in 2008. For instance, the live music project team organised the inaugural Business of Live Music conference in Edinburgh in March/April 2011, which brought together scholars and practitioners from around the world to discuss issues around live music across a variety of genres, illustrating that scholars are beginning to take live music seriously as a field of study. If this is the case, it also means that my research is at the cutting edge in a new field and that my thesis should therefore be highly publishable, particularly alongside a three-part history of live music in the UK to be written by the live music project team and published by Ashgate. Added to this, my thesis draws on and develops ideas and concepts generated by the live music project team, some of which are not yet published, therefore it is contributing to knowledge that is not yet out in the world.

The thesis is also particularly timely because of the increased importance of live music to the wider music industries in the twenty-first century wherein getting a major record deal may prove to become of less significance than a world tour or getting a slot at a major festival. Two key results of this work, then, are that it has given fresh insight into how people understand the live music event, and also how the live music industries can be thought of as separate (though intrinsically linked) industries in their own right, rather than as an addendum to the recording industries, and contributes to the debate as to whether, as Cloonan (2011b) asserts, 'promoters are the new ruling class in the music industries'.

## Main findings

The thesis set out to answer three interconnected questions: what is a live music promoter and how do they construct the live music event on behalf of the participants? How do promoters both construct and negotiate the live music ecology they work within? How does the above impact on the participant experience? Overall, then, the results of this study indicate that promoters are cultural investors (and exploiters), importers and innovators, and hence are vital – albeit often covert – figures in the musical landscape of the UK today, without whom live music would exist in a very different – and hugely diminished – form. To reiterate points made in previous chapters, live music matters because it provides an opportunity to explore, affirm and celebrate the values of the participants within the event (Small 1998, p. 183), and live music therefore continues to be an important part of the social fabric of many people's lives. Live music promoters, then, are key figures not only in the construction of the musical lives of British citizens, but also in the rich cultural (and economic) ecology of the UK's cities, towns, and villages.

More specifically, the key arguments that emerged from a critical analysis of the literature and the discussion of the results of the ethnographic work are grouped into three interconnected strands, as follows.

**The promotion of live music is highly variable and inherently risky:** This study has shown that the role of the promoter broadly consists of planning, publicising, and producing the live music event. While such a role appears simple on the surface, within these responsibilities that role may be variable, and the promotion of live music is, in fact, highly complex due to the nature of the live music event itself and the many relationships in which the promoter is necessarily involved. The pathways to becoming a promoter are also many, varied and often unique, and the term 'promoter' groups together a variety of people with differing ideologies and motivations who, for multifarious reasons, promote music. Moreover, promoters often 'wear many hats', and can also choose from a number of promotional ('independent', 'artist-affiliated', 'venue') and economic models ('enthusiast', 'commercial', 'state'), dependent on the nature of the event and their own circumstances. Within these models, live music promoters may promote events or artists within a single event, tour or season, depending partly on the promotional model in use. Finally, a promoter may be very 'hands on' or relatively 'hands off' at all stages of the

promotional process, and their role may be mediated by a number of other parties, such as promoters' representatives ('reps') and tour managers.

While the role of the promoter is therefore variable, the promoter is typically the individual or organisation that facilitates the necessary practical and economic transactions necessary for a live music event to take place, taking on financial, personal and social risks in order to do so. It is argued that all promoters are investors in live music and are therefore *necessarily* risk-takers. Promoting live music is particularly risky because promoters deal with temporal and spatial specificities uncommon to many businesses due to the nature of their 'product', therefore if their event does not sell for the specific date and time, the promoter's 'gamble' will not have paid off. Promoters constantly assess the status of artists (and venues) in the short- and the long-term; many live music events are usually organised well in advance of the actual date and so a promoter is taking the gamble on the constantly changing status of the artist (and venue) well in advance of the event taking place, and long after.

Furthermore, the promoter must adapt to the changing nature of musical trends, the constant 'churn' of artists, and the desires of the audiences. If audiences want the same programme year after year, the promoter should provide it. As Raymond Gubbay, head of the UK's largest classical music promotional company, explained:-

I've always believed in putting on what people want to hear, what people want to go and see ... Basically people want to go out and be entertained. In my case, with my sort of events, to hear music that they know and love, and that's what I give them' (Desert Island Discs 2006).

But if there is also an audience out there who desire new and innovative programmes – particularly young audiences desirous for the next generation's own sounds and artists – then the promoter should also cater for them in order to maintain variety within the live music ecology.

That promoters are not all the same, then, that they share some characteristics but vary widely in others, is part of the reason that each local live music ecology is unique and diverse. Without a variety of promoters, it is therefore suggested that live music in the UK would perhaps be relatively homogenous: each city would be the same and the listings pages in the press would be repetitive and dull. As one promoter warned, concerned at

the increasing spread of O<sub>2</sub> Academies around the UK: 'It's like going to, say, West Berlin, and going, "Oh, it's a Woolworths ... Oh, it's a WH Smiths. Oh, I was expecting something different"' (Hobson 2008). Moreover, as societies consist of people with diverse and sometimes conflicting values and tastes, it is important for there to be a wide variety of live music available and hence a wide variety of live music promoters.

**Promoters both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology:** The promotion of live music does not take place in a vacuum, and promoters both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology via the networks and infrastructures within which the promoter necessarily operates. Thus their role is made more complex by the necessity of working within a variety of external constraints, which relate to safety, physical infrastructure, and subsidy. Tensions may exist between the parameters set by promoters and those set by others within the ecology, but while they may resent such constraints, they are necessary for promoters to carry out their events and, ultimately, to help sustain the promoter's long-term career. The thesis has therefore raised awareness of the significance of the state as regards the promotion of live music at a time where changes to the restrictions on 'regulated entertainment' are being discussed at a national level. As stated in Chapter One, local and national policy-makers would benefit from an understanding both of how local live music promotion works and how it fits in with the wider structure of the live music industries in the UK, particularly in regard to city regeneration and the creative industries.

The live music ecology also consists of the relationships that promoters have with other promoters, whether through personal relationships or via formal and informal networks. Within the live music ecology, the many social and business relationships a promoter necessarily has to develop and maintain therefore affect who and what is promoted. Promoters are both local cultural champions and cultural importers; they both promote local artists and bring non-local artists from around the UK and from around the world into a locality. However, the thesis has shown that the changing structures within the wider live music industries in the twenty-first century are affecting the local live music ecology, and thus highlighted the need for studies of local phenomena to take into account the impact of global forces.

**Promoters perform a vital role in mediating between a number of different parties in the live music event:** The live music event consists of participants with sometimes contradictory motivations and desires, hence the promoter's role is one of mediation between artist, audience, and venue, although this may be direct or via another intermediary party. Hence while promoters need to treat artists well if they are to return and play for them again, the promoter's relationship to the artist is often negotiated via an agent (and/or tour manager). Furthermore, while some promoters have a close, even personal, connection with their audiences, the relationship between the promoter and the audience may be mediated via other figures such as venue staff. Thus promoters necessarily broker a number of conflicting interests against their own need to make a profit (or avoid a loss), and the promoter's role is therefore to persuade each party that the transaction between them is fair. At a time where the world faces economic uncertainty, this is particularly important if live music in the UK is to continue to thrive. As Cloonan states, 'in the longer term promoters have to ensure that they don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg by overpricing and taking too many risks' (2011b). Hence the live music industries would do well to take heed of the current (alleged) crisis in the recording industries and remember that, as promoter Mark Mackie warns, 'The whole thing has to be a good night out, and if the punter feels they've been *cheated* in some way, they'll come less' (Mackie 2008, emphasis in original).

## Reflections on the findings

As someone who has been actively involved in the promotion of live music since 2000, there were still many findings from my research that were unforeseen. The breadth of live music on offer, even within a single venue, was pleasantly surprising. The depth of understanding that venues and promoters possess about their audiences within each genre frame was, while perhaps not surprising, certainly very apparent. Across the three cities and across genre frames, the homogeneity of signals used by both artists and audiences to indicate positive (and negative) feedback was, again, surprising, such as the use of the encore ritual, or the use of the name of the locality to elicit a positive response (although these are obviously culturally specific). Behind-the-scenes, I was constantly impressed at how hard those involved worked both to put on a show and to conceal the hard work that is necessary in order to do so. Indeed, the general opacity of the machinations of the live music industries to audiences was very apparent across the

board. The extent of the informal networks between those working in the live music sector was also of interest, and was only able to be touched on in this thesis. The convoluted networks of ownership and the blurring of boundaries between 'state', 'enthusiast' and 'commercial' promoters were also of great interest and require further investigation. It was also surprising just how much the live music sector is in a constant state of flux. Even during the course of my research, a number of events have wound up (for example, Razor Stiletto and Lower), venues have closed (The Boardwalk and The Grapes, for instance), and interviewees have moved on to other jobs (Jane Donald and Graham Howell, for example).

However, there is a danger of over-rationalising what is an extraordinary and peculiar world. On a broader level, then, what was particularly surprising was the astonishing importance of trust and what that means in this world, given the competitiveness of the live music sector.<sup>103</sup> As Frith *et al* state, it is an exploitative business based on face-to-face goodwill (2010, p. 3), and this is just one of a number of peculiar and seemingly contradictory facets of the live music sector. On the one hand, then, promotion is intensely competitive, and yet on the other, it is also remarkably collaborative, and it was highly surprising to realise that many of the competing regional and national promoters know each other personally and count each other as friends. In this way, the networks between promoters are perhaps unlike that of many businesses, but can partly be accounted for by the relatively small numbers of large-scale promoters in the UK and also by the nature of promotion as a 'people business' (Coyle 2009).

Awards ceremonies and industry conferences allow for more structured – and self-congratulatory – networking. What was also apparent at the conferences that I attended were the obvious hierarchies in the industries, easily identifiable by the confidence of those 'at the top' in their manner of dress and speech (who could talk the loudest and swear the most). And this highlights another point, which is that while this research has shown that promoters are investors in live music, promoters do not speak like 'business people' and little 'business jargon' appears in promoters' discourses, both in the interviews and at the conferences. While Live Nation ends its press releases with a

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<sup>103</sup> The high level of trust and the importance of business/personal relationships also go some way to explaining the seeming disregard for formal contracts.

corporate-sounding mission statement that references its 'global concert pipe' and its 'artist-to-fan vertically integrated concert platform' (Live Nation 2009), the head of Live Nation in the UK, Paul Latham, describes promoters instead as 'cottage industries' (Latham 2009), a perhaps deliberately more informal and somewhat 'cosy' view of a sometimes cut-throat business. In this way, promoters' discourses perhaps become a means of maintaining their authenticity in a sector that professes to be 'all about the music, man'.

Another finding was that the backstage world of live music is intensely sociable, perhaps reflecting the inherently social nature of the live music event. As stage manager Derek McVay stated: 'All my friends, over twenty-five years in the business, are out on the road, mostly, so it's a good way to see your friends, and make new friends as well' (2010). While artists and audiences come and go, the people behind-the-scenes remain the same. The live music event, then, creates an environment for the backstage staff to both work and socialise. Staff at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, for example, often socialise together outside the venue and with other DF Concerts employees; even on their nights off, staff also hang out at the venue, not to see gigs, but instead to socialise with their friends. In this way, working life and social life blur, and work is not seen as work as such, but as 'a way of life' (Latham 2009), wherein people seek the Confucian ideal of doing a job that they enjoy so as never having to work again.

A final point to be made is that because of the nature of live music and the nature of promoters, they necessarily move between a number of different worlds and deal with a wide variety of people. Latham went so far as to describe the 'business' as a subculture (*ibid.*), and while it is perhaps not a subculture in the sense that the Birmingham School intended, there are certainly elements of those within it inhabiting a 'floating world' outside the everyday and the mundane. One of the findings of my research is that promoters are often involved in a number of enterprises at any one time, some of which may be 'on the level', while others may be somewhat more dodgy and necessitate working with less than savoury characters. As Cloonan states, live music is both highly regulated and completely anarchic at one and the same time (2011a). Alan Deadman, for example, could be peer-reviewing an Arts Council England funding application or dealing with Sheffield City Council's marketing and tourism department one day, while the next dealing with somewhat disreputable venue and security staff, or out illegally fly-posting

around Sheffield. I was perhaps already aware that promoters may be (or certainly regard themselves as) somewhat maverick people, outside the 'norms' of society, but the types of people who promote live music are also of great interest. While Frith's (2008a) formulation of the factors required for a live music event includes the figure of the promoter as a necessary component, what it does not illustrate is the astonishing variety of people who promote live music, and an equally wide variety of motivations and desires.

## **Reflections on the study**

The first point to reflect on is the issue of undertaking a PhD studentship within a larger funded project. Working as part of a larger team also meant that I had very regular contact with my supervisors, allowing for discussion of ideas with highly eminent scholars, and ensuring that I did not go adrift. Another advantage was that the parameters had already been set to an extent, as had the methodology and bibliography, which in all likelihood prevented a number of fruitless dead-ends. This is not to suggest that my PhD was in any way not my own, however. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Three, my contribution changed the direction of the project, from a bias towards major festivals and promoters to an increased focus on the importance of the local and on 'hidden' promoters. Added to this, I carried out all the contemporary ethnographic research and a good proportion of the local historical research and contemporary secondary research, which equated to approximately half of the entire research for the project. Other advantages were that I occupied a somewhat privileged position among my peers, whereby it was much easier to access other notable scholars through my supervisors' contacts; that I was able to attend a number of conferences at the expense of the project; that I received a much needed bursary; and that I had the opportunity for co-authorship of papers and books.

My professional experience within live music promotion also had a number of interesting ramifications relating to the research approach. As Aitkenhead states, 'The roots of all knowledge lie in accurate observation, and it is our duty as scholars to strive to be as accurate as possible, within the limitations imposed by our personal idiosyncrasies, culture, age, status and preconceptions' (2005, p. 193). As far as possible, then, the data was processed analytically and methodically, but the view of promoters has also necessarily been guided by my own experiences. However, I believe that, as far as is

possible, I have not written a celebratory account of promoters, but instead have analysed and assessed the data based on my decisions regarding the validity of what promoters told me or what I experienced in the field. With this in mind, then, I believe that this thesis is the best that I can offer and that it will provide the foundation for future research and debate around a previously under-researched topic.

Another issue was the use of my 'insider knowledge' within the thesis itself, some of which could have been deemed 'commercially sensitive information' by my past employers and/or colleagues. Two instances occurred to illustrate this, both concerning Opera North. I contacted my ex-manager a number of times to ask for advice about particular topics and/or to check whether she would allow me to reference particular aspects of the company's work. One regarded the company's advertising strategy, which she authorised; the other concerned an issue regarding one of the company's sponsors, which she asked me not to use. In this way I treated my prior experiences as I would do an external interviewee or research subject, allowing my past employers to veto information that they were not happy with. I also draw on my professional experiences a number of times throughout the text, to support and extend points raised by interview subjects or experienced during participant observation. In this sense, I was using myself as a research subject, and therefore necessarily accepted that in much the same way that my interviewees' memories are not infallible, such events may well have been misremembered or unconsciously changed over time.

The final point to reflect on is the methodology chosen for the research. As stated above, ethnography was the intended methodology for the PhD student, but I broadened out what Frith and Cloonan had perhaps originally intended to include three case study cities, a number of case study venues, and many in-depth interviews. As far as I am aware, to compare and contrast Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol in the context of live music promotion is unique and the majority of the case study venues had also not been studied before in any context. In this way, I have contributed to a constantly evolving ethnographic methodology, one which is suitable for studying the members of such a diverse group of people across the UK, some of whom work solely at the local level, some of whom work regionally, nationally, and/or internationally.

The problem with collecting such rich and varied data, however, is how to utilise it in a satisfactory way. Before sitting down to write the thesis, I created a number of elaborate thesis plans with anticipated word counts for each section, which were intended to cover issues around gender, industry, audience motivations, technological considerations, etc. However, as the writing process went on and threatened to go down any number of different avenues which would have meant a 200,000 word thesis, I had to keep returning to the primary research question: what do promoters do? While my audience research yielded some fascinating results, for example, I felt that the focus on promoters meant that much of this data could not be used in the final thesis, although it guided my conclusions. Similarly, the participant observation guided my analysis but much of it ended up 'on the cutting room floor' rather than in the final thesis. In a similar way, what began as case study cities and venues became examples in the final write-up. While an ethnography would perhaps be expected to contain more 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) than the finished thesis, the limitations of space meant such descriptions are implicit rather than explicit. The following section will illustrate how I intend to use some of the omitted data, as well as suggesting a number of possible future paths of enquiry.

## **Suggestions for future research**

The evidence from this investigation suggests that the study of live music is a rich and hitherto relatively unexplored area of research, but one that has great implications for the future practice and study of social life in the UK, policy issues, and economics. The methodology, while yielding rich data, necessarily led to the study of a tiny proportion of the world's population of promoters, within a fixed timeframe and within particular locales. This research has therefore suggested some potentially worthwhile paths for future studies.

Due to limitations of space within a thesis such as this, there were many aspects of my research which were unfortunately unable to be included but which I plan to use in future journal articles and conference papers. For example, one of the original intentions was to include a 'thick description' of one particular gig at the end of each chapter – Stereophonics at Glasgow's SECC in March 2010 – to illustrate how the issues addressed in each chapter affect the promoter in practice. Now intended to be a journal article, this will draw on interviews with the promoter, backstage crew, and audience members, and

also the participant observation from the event in question. Another planned journal article will draw on the extensive interviews with audience members to examine audience motivations for attending live music events, to compare and contrast these with how promoters 'understand the live music experience that they seek to persuade audiences to enjoy' (Frith and Cloonan, n.d.). Another intention is to write a 'thick description' of one of the case study venues – Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall – again drawing on audience interviews and participant observation. At this venue in particular I probably witnessed the greatest variation in audience motivations and behaviour between different events and I believe that such an article could also examine the role of a 'state' venue as a 'jack of all trades' in their programming policies.

In order to further illustrate the richness of the data collected during the research period but that could not be included in this work, I presented at two IASPM<sup>104</sup> conferences in June 2011. These included an extended discussion of collaboration and competition at a local, national, and international level at the IASPM-Canada Annual Conference in Montreal, and the impact of digital technology on live music in the twenty-first century at the IASPM 16th Biennial International Conference in Grahamstown, South Africa, drawing on interview material and participant observation at Glasgow's SECC. Finally, articles already published or in press include "'One more tune!" The encore ritual in live music events', accepted for publication in *Popular Music and Society* in September 2010 (due for publication in October 2012), and 'King Tut's Wah Wah Hut: initial research into a "local" live music venue' (in Frith *et al* 2010).

As regards future research, the importance of locality to live music promotion was one particularly important finding within this work. An in-depth study of one city with reference to national and international networks and infrastructures – akin to Cohen's (1991) and Finnegan's (2007) work – would therefore enrich the understanding of how live music promotion works in one particular locality. This would allow for a greater understanding of the impact of corporatisation at all levels of live music promotion and a measure of the extent to which even the smallest promoter or venue is linked to the global music industries, albeit often unwittingly. Within such a study, research into the movement of artists around the UK and beyond would also be of great value in the light

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<sup>104</sup> International Association for the Study of Popular Music.

of the threat of climate change. According to a report into the UK music industry's greenhouse gas emissions, live events are responsible for seventy-five per cent of the industry's carbon footprint (Fisher 2008), hence research into live music promotion in this context would be both timely and important.

Within the context of the live music industries, future research that would be both worthwhile and interesting includes issues around genre and gender. Negus, in his work on music genres and corporate cultures (1999), investigates how the recording industries divide and constrain certain genre practices, but further research could extend this notion to show how the *live* music industries also perpetuate and construct musical genres. Similarly, a study of gender within the live music industries would illustrate how the live music industries appear to perpetuate and construct 'traditional' gender roles. My research showed that there is a depressingly unsurprising gender imbalance within certain sectors of the live music industries (akin to the work of Cohen 1991; Hutton 2006; Robson 2006), and there were noticeable differences in the balance of genders across discourses and genre frames. A cross-genre approach to gender within the live music industries would therefore be of great value to the future study of live music promotion.

# Appendix One

## List of live music events attended at case study venues

Event	Venue	Location	Date	Promoter
Kristin Hersh	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	18/05/09	DF Concerts
The Breeders	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	19/05/09	DF Concerts
The Breeders	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	20/05/09	DF Concerts
Bell XI	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	21/05/09	DF Concerts
Duchess Says	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	22/05/09	DF Concerts
The Horrors	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	29/05/09	DF Concerts
Goldheart Assembly	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	04/06/09	DF Concerts
Blue October	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	05/06/09	DF Concerts
Howard Eliot Payne	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	06/06/09	DF Concerts
Teitur	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	07/06/09	DF Concerts
Lady Sovereign	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	08/06/09	DF Concerts
Unicorn Kid	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	09/06/09	DF Concerts
Sucioperro	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Glasgow	15/06/09	DF Concerts
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	29/06/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	30/06/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	01/07/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	03/07/09	n/a

Sharrow Festival	Mount Pleasant Park	Sheffield	04/07/09	Sharrow Festival
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	06/07/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	07/07/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	08/07/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	10/07/09	n/a
Folk session	Fagan's	Sheffield	11/07/09	n/a
Titi Robin Band	St George's Bristol	Bristol	01/10/09	St George's Bristol
Paul Lewis	St George's Bristol	Bristol	02/10/09	St George's Bristol
Brandon Hill Chamber Orchestra	St George's Bristol	Bristol	03/10/09	Brandon Hill Chamber Orchestra
Seckou Keita Quintet	St George's Bristol	Bristol	04/10/09	St George's Bristol
Trio Fantasia	St George's Bristol	Bristol	05/10/09	MD Satal Ltd
Julie Fowles	St George's Bristol	Bristol	06/10/09	Unknown
Barbirolli Quartet	St George's Bristol	Bristol	08/10/09	St George's Bristol
Christian Blackshaw	St George's Bristol	Bristol	09/10/09	St George's Bristol
English National Baroque Ensemble	St George's Bristol	Bristol	10/10/09	English National Baroque Ensemble
Michael Morpurgo: The Mozart Question	St George's Bristol	Bristol	11/10/09	St George's Bristol
The Bad Plus	St George's Bristol	Bristol	12/10/09	St George's Bristol
Brodsky Quartet with Tunde Jegede	St George's Bristol	Bristol	13/10/09	St George's Bristol
Adrian Edmondson and The Bad Shepherds	St George's Bristol	Bristol	14/10/09	St George's Bristol
Only Men Aloud: A Christmas Concert	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	01/12/09	DF Concerts & SJM
Runrig	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	02/12/09	Regular Music
RSNO: Roger Norrington	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	05/12/09	RSNO
Steve Earle	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	06/12/09	DF Concerts

East Dunbartonshire Christmas Concert	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	07/12/09	East Dunbartonshire Council
The Bootleg Beatles	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	08/12/09	Unknown
Alison Moyet	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	09/12/09	Regular Music
Here Come the Girls (featuring Lulu, Chaka Khan and Anastacia)	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	10/12/09	DF Concerts & SJM
The Glasgow Phoenix Choir	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	11/12/09	The Glasgow Phoenix Choir
Let It Snow	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	12/12/09	Children's Classic Concerts
RSNO: Great Concertos	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	12/12/09	RSNO
Christmas at the Musicals	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	13/12/09	West End International
Ray Davies	Glasgow Royal Concert Hall	Glasgow	14/12/09	Regular Music
Stereophonics	SECC (Hall Four)	Glasgow	02/03/10	Regular Music
Katherine Jenkins	SECC (Clyde Auditorium)	Glasgow	04/03/10	DF Concerts
Elvis in Concert	SECC (Hall Four)	Glasgow	06/03/10	3A / Jef Hanlon
X Factor Live	SECC (Hall Four)	Glasgow	08/03/10	3A
Lynyrd Skynyrd	SECC (Clyde Auditorium)	Glasgow	09/03/10	Live Nation
The Dave Matthews Band	SECC (Hall Four)	Glasgow	11/03/10	DF Concerts
Star Wars in Concert	SECC (Hall Four)	Glasgow	13/03/10	DF Concerts
Bad Bass	Lakota	Bristol	26/03/10	Bad Bass
Tribe of Frog	Lakota	Bristol	27/03/10	Tribe of Frog
Pink Froot, Samantha Maris Band, Robert Edis	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	29/03/10	SongSmith
The Evil Beat, My Chloroform	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	30/03/10	Unknown
Mr Wolfs open mic jam session	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	31/03/10	Mr Wolfs
Brown Note April fools special	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	01/04/10	Brown Note

Jungle Syndicate	Lakota	Bristol	02/04/10	Jungle Syndicate
Relapse	Lakota	Bristol	03/04/10	Relapse
Ship Shape	Lakota	Bristol	04/04/10	Ship Shape
Project 13 hip hop night	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	06/04/10	Project 13
Mr Wolfs open mic jam session	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	07/04/10	Mr Wolfs
Jarmean, Nuff Said, Thrill Collins	Mr Wolfs	Bristol	08/04/10	Cleverhead

# Appendix Two

## List of interviewees at case study venues<sup>105</sup>

Name	Company	Position (at time of interview)	Date interviewed	Location	Type of promoter <sup>106</sup>	Promotional model <sup>107</sup>
Bay Whittaker	Fagan's	Session host	01/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Artist-affiliated
Tom Boulding	Fagan's	Landlord	29/06/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Venue
Trevor Thomas	Fagan's	Session participant	06/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Artist-affiliated
Gordon Hodge	Glasgow Concert Halls	Senior Customers Services Manager	16/12/09	Glasgow	State	Venue
Jane Donald	Glasgow Concert Halls	Head of Sales and Marketing	17/02/10	Glasgow	State	Venue
Karen Taylor	Glasgow Concert Halls	Head of Events and Commercial Development	09/02/10	Glasgow	State	Venue
Peter Winckles	Glasgow Concert Halls	Acting Chief Executive	18/12/09	Glasgow	State	Venue
Claire Simpson	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Bar person	19/05/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Dave McGeachan	DF Concerts	Senior Promoter	13/05/10	Glasgow	Commercial	Independent / Venue

<sup>105</sup> This list does not include those interviewees who preferred to remain anonymous; the list also does not include the many informal conversations that were had with staff at case study venues.

<sup>106</sup> It should be pointed out that the type of promoter indicated in the table above is the interviewee's usual or preferred type, but, as shown throughout the thesis, the promoter is not bound to any one type, as a promoter may use a different type for different events.

<sup>107</sup> As with the previous footnote, the promotional model indicated in the table is the usual or preferred model, but, as shown throughout the thesis, the promoter is not bound to any one model, as a promoter may use different models for different events.

Guillaume Coet	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Bar manager and licensee	17/06/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Paul Hepburn	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Sound engineer	20/05/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Robert Fenton	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Side of stage security / crew	21/05/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Sam Francis	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Production assistant	09/06/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Marti Burgess	Lakota	Co-owner	08/04/10	Bristol	Enthusiast	Venue
Mark Wolf	Mr Wolfs	Owner	07/04/10	Bristol	Enthusiast	Venue
Ross McCrae	Mr Wolfs	General manager	07/04/10	Bristol	Enthusiast	Venue
Davy White	Regular Music	Freelance safety advisor	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Derek McVay	Stereophonics' 2010 UK tour	Stage manager	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Graeme Roberts	Regular Music	Production manager / promoter's rep	02/03/10	Glasgow	Commercial	Independent
John Thompson	Stereophonics' 2010 UK tour	Head of Security	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Kara Anderson	Stereophonics' 2010 UK tour	Production Assistant	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Neil McDonald	Stereophonics' 2010 UK tour	Production Manager	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Tam Coyle	Hip Parade (Stereophonics' support act)	Co-manager	02/03/10	Glasgow	n/a	n/a
Anne-Marie Harwood	SECC	Market Research Manager	02/03/10	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Duncan Hoffman	Sharrow Community Festival	Steward	04/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	
Simon Williams	Sharrow Community Festival	Stage Manager	04/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Gary Prestwich	St George's Bristol	Marketing Officer	14/10/09	Bristol	State	Independent
Steve Parkhouse	St George's Bristol	Concert Manager	08/10/09	Bristol	State	Independent
Suzanne Rolt	St George's Bristol	Director	12/10/09	Bristol	State	Independent

# Appendix Three

## List of promoters interviewed external to case study venues<sup>108</sup>

Name	Company	Position (at time of interview)	Date interviewed	Location	Type of promoter <sup>109</sup>	Promotional model <sup>110</sup>
Alan Deadman	The JuJu Club	Administrator	19/08/08	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Alex Reedijk	Scottish Opera	General Director	15/09/09 & 20/10/09	Glasgow	State	Artist-affiliated
Ben Dubuisson	Native nightclub	Ex-owner	12/10/09	Bristol	Commercial	Venue
Chris Wilson	The Boardwalk	Manager / promoter	21/08/08	Sheffield	Venue	Venue
Conal Dodds	Metropolis Music	Promoter	29/03/10	Bristol	Commercial	Independent
Crae Caldwell	DF Concerts / Slam Events	Outdoor Production Manager (freelance) / Co-promoter	30/09/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Independent
Fielding Hope	Cry Parrot	Promoter	15/02/10	Glasgow	Enthusiast	Independent
Gerry Bates	n/a	Facilitator	01/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Graeme Howell	Colston Hall	Director	31/03/10	Bristol	State	Venue
Graham Campbell	African Caribbean Network	Chair	22/02/10	Glasgow	Enthusiast	Venue
Hayley Pearce	Thekla	Ex-venue manager	24/11/08	Bristol	Commercial	Venue

<sup>108</sup> See Appendix Two for notes on the list of interviewees.

<sup>109</sup> See Appendix Two for notes on the type of promoter.

<sup>110</sup> See Appendix Two for notes on the promotional model used.

Isla Angus	Tune Up / Nomanis / Synergy	Manager / Agent / Ex-promoter	18/09/09	Glasgow	Enthusiast	Independent
Jill Rodger	Glasgow International Jazz Festival	Director	30/01/09	Glasgow	State	Independent
Ken Green	Working Men's Club and Institute Union	South Yorkshire CIU branch secretary	07/07/09	Barnsley	n/a	n/a
Mark Hobson	Corporation nightclub	Owner / Promoter	21/08/08	Sheffield	Commercial	Venue
Mark Mackie	Regular Music	Director / Promoter	01/07/08	Edinburgh	Commercial	Independent
Mark Ross	The Tuesday Club	Ex-promoter	08/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Matt Otridge	The Croft	Director	08/10/09	Bristol	Enthusiast	Venue
Penny Blackham	University of Sheffield Union of Students	Ex-live events manager	04/05/10	Sheffield	State	Venue
Peter MacCalman	PM Music	Promoter	21/09/09	Glasgow	Commercial	Independent
Ralph Razor	Razor Stiletto	Ex-promoter	19/08/08	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Robin Morton	Brel	Co-owner	20/11/08	Glasgow	Commercial	Venue
Rose Maclean	Lower	Promoter	05/06/08	Edinburgh	Enthusiast	Independent
Chris Trout, James Golf, Adam Clark	Smokers Die Younger / Electric Blanket	Band members / DIY promoters	21/08/08	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Artist-affiliated
Stuart Basford	Jewel Promotions	Promoter	06/07/09	Sheffield	Enthusiast	Independent
Tony Benjamin	Venue (magazine)	Journalist / Promoter	09/10/09	Bristol	n/a	n/a
Tracy Johnson	Music in the Round	Concert Manager	30/06/09	Sheffield	State	Artist-affiliated

# Appendix Four

## Questions for external promoters

### General information

What is your name, age, and job title (if applicable)?

What was the first gig you were involved with? Who paid for the gig? Who had the original idea? How did you set it up? Who were the connecting people?

What were your motivations for moving into a backstage role?

How would you describe what you do, e.g. are you a promoter? What do you see as your role before, during and after events? Would you describe yourself as an independent promoter?

What qualities do you think are important to have as a promoter?

Would you say your primary responsibility is to the audience or to the artist?

Do you attend every live music event that you promote? Do you think the promoter has a duty to attend every event?

Talk me through how you would go about putting on a concert – beginning, middle, end – who are the important people you need to liaise with at each step, both internally and externally?

How do you programme your events?

Do you use agents? If so, who are the important agents in your field?

When booking acts, how aware of the target audience are you? Do you book acts because you know they'll appeal to a certain demographic, or because you want to see them perform?

How far do you have to plan ahead with what you do? What are the time-scales involved.

Do you use contracts with the artists you book?

Are there any artists that you would not book, even if you thought they would make you a profit, due to perceived problems with the artist or the artist's typical audience?

How much of your business involves dealing with cash?

Has the current financial situation affected what you do (e.g. attendance)?

What is the significance of certain types of venues, esp. student unions/college circuit?  
How has this changed over time?

How much are you restrained by what is available in terms of venues? Are you able to be creative in your choice of venue or are there certain restrictions?

With the venues you use, are you able to dictate the kind of environment you require, to include on-stage lighting, seating, etc.? If not, who decides such issues?

With the artists you work with, do you have any say over such elements as programme or encore?

Do you have any 'rivals' or do you tend to co-exist happily with other, similar, organisations? What are your significant partnerships? Would you describe your field as co-operative?

Has the sponsorship of live music (esp. alcohol) changed? Have you had direct dealings with sponsorship; is it important to you?

What is your relationship with the media (local/national) and how important do you feel they are in terms of the success of your live music event?

How much, if at all, has the internet changed what you do/how you work?

What are the significant methods of communicating with your audience?

What are the current threats to your organisation?

What are the current opportunities for your organisation?

### **Audience behaviour/etiquette**

Have you noticed any changes in audience make-up over time? If so, any theories as to why this may be?

How aware are you of your audience, in terms of demography? Is it important to you to understand how and why your audience attend your events?

How do you think audiences learn how to behave at your events? Is this something your organisation actively tries to do?

Have you seen audience behaviour change over time?

How different is it for different types of event?

Have you had any problems relating to audience behaviour? If so, whose responsibility was it to deal with these?

Can you generalise about audience behaviour in your locality? Do you only promote in your locale or are you able to make any comparisons about significant changes in audience behaviour or make-up around the UK?

### **Glasgow/Sheffield/Bristol**

How much do you feel supported by the local council? Is there anything they could do or *not* do that would make life easier for your organisation?

What qualities do you think form a 'healthy' musical city? Do you think your city fulfils these qualities? If not, why not? Would you describe your city as a co-operative city?

How do local/national government regulations affect what you do? How aware are you of government regulations? E.g. noise at work, licensing, smoking ban, health safety, etc.

Have there been any issues over licensing, advertising, policing, etc. between your organisation and the city council?

Any significant changes in policy by the city council which have affected your organisation?

Do you have any special policies for dealing with under-18s, or if a concert is going to be attended by mostly under-18s? Is that the responsibility of the venue rather than yourself?

### **Live music industries**

Have you noticed any shifts in your field of live music?

Have you noticed any impact from corporations such as Live Nation on what you do?

Has your field become more 'professionalised' over the years? If so, when, why, and how?

Are there any issues with secondary ticketing in your field?

What is your perception of women in the live music industry?

### **And finally ...**

How do you understand the experience that you seek to persuade your audiences to enjoy?

Why do think people value the live music experience?

Have there been any complete disasters while you've been involved with the promotion of live music?

Are you happy to be contacted again in relation to this research?

# Appendix Five

## Questions for audiences at case study venues

- Is this your first time at the venue?
- If so, is it what you expected?  
If not, when did you first come? Have you noticed any changes over the years?
- What motivated you to come tonight? (e.g. headliner, support band, venue, friends, etc.)
- How did you hear about it? (e.g. via friends, online, listings, poster, etc.)
- Why do you attend music events?
- How do you behave when you're there? How do you know how to behave? (e.g. stage diving, etc.)

# Appendix Six

## **Consent form for interviewees**

**CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA**

I understand that **Emma Webster** is collecting data in the form of **taped interviews / transcripts / emails / questionnaires / written notes** for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

Emma is part of the joint research project between the music departments at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow. The official title of the project is 'The Promotion of Live Music in the UK: A Historical, Cultural and Institutional Analysis', which aims to investigate the social, cultural and economic impact of live music in the UK over the past 50 years. (For more information, please go to **[www.music.gla.ac.uk/livemusicproject](http://www.music.gla.ac.uk/livemusicproject)**)

Emma's PhD thesis, which began in April 2008, will contribute to the above project by undertaking a comparative ethnography of live music events, venues and promoters. An understanding of promoters' motivations, skills, characteristics, duties, and methods will be obtained as a means of understanding their participation in the ritual event that is live music. This will be achieved through research at live music events across all genres, including festivals; **via interviews / questionnaires with music industries personnel, musicians and audiences**; and textual analysis of local music history and local music press, including fanzines.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- The material, once transcribed, is the property of the above Project and the University of Glasgow.

I would prefer to remain anonymous (please tick this box / fill with an X)

I would like a copy of the transcript (please tick this box / fill with an X)

If you would like a copy of the thesis and/or subsequent work (please tick this box / fill with an X)

Signed by the contributor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

By typing your name above and emailing it to **emmaswebster@gmail.com**, this qualifies as a handwritten signature, and will therefore be used to show your consent.

If you would rather print the form out and return it via post, please do so to the address below.

Researcher's name: **Emma Webster**

Supervisor's name: **Professor Martin Cloonan**

Department address: **Department of Music, 14 University Gardens, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QH, Scotland, UK**

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